

## Window on Jordan

# Khamasin and snow storms hit Jordan

By a Star Staff Writer  
ONE DAY after a terrible Khamasin sandstorm slammed into Jordan a blizzard blanketed Amman and the mountainous areas of the Kingdom on early Wednesday in a white icy cover. The snow storm took Jordanians by surprise, gridding life to a halt and isolating entire areas.

The blizzard will last until early Friday, Jordan's weatherman said.

Earlier in the week, a sandstorm, churned up in the North African desert, covered the Middle East on Monday in a haze of dust so thick that flights could not take off or land, sea ports had to be closed and people had difficulty breathing. At least

four persons were killed in Egypt and 29 injured in road accidents.

The storm, described as the worst ever in Lebanon and the most severe in Jordan in 50 years, reduced visibility to as little as 200 meters. Israel, Egypt, and Syria were also badly hit.

Thirteen people were admitted to hospital in Amman with breathing problems, officials said.

The winds, which originated in the Libyan-Egyptian desert in North Africa, are a seasonal pattern known as Al Khamasin. The Egyptian capital, Cairo and other parts of the country have been wrapped in the yellowish haze of dust since Sunday.

In Jordan, a car crashed into a fuel tanker on a highway linking Amman and Baghdad. One person was reported killed and another injured.

The Khamasin (50) usually occur between 15 March and 10 May, according to Hisham Al Shaer, general director of the Meteorological Dept. He said during this period pockets of low pressure form south and north of the Atlas mountains in North Africa. He added that this low pressure turbulence take place as colder air pushes into North Africa and meets warmer air in that region.

During this period between six to eight depressions

Continued on page 2



# The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Le Journal  
Un centre pour  
Conserver Pétra  
Les journaux sur  
internet  
page 14

## Inside

- Special Banking Section
- Mother's Day Gift Ideas
- Full Sports Page

AMMAN, 19-25 MARCH 1998, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 42, 350 FILS

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

## Sharon rhetoric spells false start to 'new beginning'

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer

THE STATEMENTS by Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon promising to assassinate Hamas political leader Khaled Misha'al have stunned Jordanians, coming in the wake of recent diplomatic efforts to mend damaged relations between the two countries which went sour following last September's failed attempt on Misha'al's life.

Ironically, the peace agreement has brought the issue of Israeli security concerns into the open in a far from ambiguous way.

Last September's Mossad attempt to assassinate Hamas politburo chief Khaled Misha'al in Amman demonstrated the arrogance of the Israeli secret service as well as the intransigence of the Israeli government. Officially, Israel did not apologize, but promised not to make another assassination attempt on Jordanian soil.

Jordan, legal home of five top Hamas leaders, played several diplomatic cards and saved the region from another round of violence. His Majesty King Hussein played a paramount role in what became known as the Misha'al Affair, first demanding—and getting—the antidote for the poison used in the attack, as well as cutting a deal that freed Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, and two dozen Palestinian and Jordanian political prisoners long held in Israeli jails.

Tense relations continued for months after the botched Mossad operation until an historic peace initiative, undertaken by HRH Prince Hassan last week, Prince Hassan, accompanied by nine Lower House deputies, made two important visits, first to Ramallah in the Occupied Territories where he met with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and later to Tel Aviv, there, he met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who, together with Prince Hassan, issued a 10-point statement calling for the resumption of multilateral negotiations.



However, Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon turned the Jordanian initiative into an embarrassment. The notorious Sharon went public with a promise of another attempt to kill Misha'al, and sparked a new round of tensions.

Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Information Dr. Abdallah Nsour said during a

press conference that, if true, Sharon's comments were "rude." He added that the remarks were not only offensive, they did not serve the cause of peace.

"The statements by Sharon were irresponsible, ill timed, and faulty," Nsour said. Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs called in the Israeli Ambassador to register an official complaint to Sharon's statement.

Sharon, who helped negotiate the freedom of the two Mossad agents, said in a televised interview with Israeli channel 2 that during these negotiations, he had informed King Hussein that Israel would eliminate Misha'al, but assured the King that the assassination would not take place in Jordan.

Nsour denied such claims. "He [Sharon] did not discuss with any Jordanian official at any stage Israel's determination to assassinate Khaled Misha'al in a location away from Jordan," he said.

However, Israeli affairs ana-

Continued on page 2

## King, Clinton meeting will focus on ending tension in the region

WASHINGTON (Petra)—His Majesty King Hussein is expected to meet with President Clinton on Thursday in what has been described in Washington as an important visit, in both timing and nature.

The King, the first Middle East leader to meet President Clinton following the latest development in the region, is said to be seeking ways to end causes of tension in the region, be it the Iraqi issue or the stalled peace process.

The King left the Mayo Clinic in Ohio Monday after undergoing routine medical check-ups which were satisfactory.

In Washington, the King met on Tuesday with Senator Jesse Helms, head of the Foreign Relations Committee, who expressed support for Jordan's role in the region and for the King's efforts.

Jordan's ambassador to Washington Dr. Marwan Muasher told JTV Tuesday that the King's visit follows on the heels of a stum-

bling peace process and follows the recent Iraqi UN crisis.

"We are, perhaps, the only state that can speak with all parties and enjoy the confidence of them all," Muasher said, pointing out that Jordan has launched intense diplomatic activities, including the visit of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to Ramallah and Tel Aviv, as well as a previous visit of the King to Cairo.

"All this led to a group of ideas and positions which Jordan is carrying to the United States, but not as an initiative," he said.

"The Iraqi crisis has to be dealt with through a wider form in order to end the suffering of the Iraqi people," Muasher said.

"To reach this stage we have to see Iraq implement fully the UN resolutions."

On the issue of US financial assistance to Jordan, Dr. Muasher said "US aid to Jordan is

Continued on page 2



DOMES UNDER COVER—The dome of the King Abdullah Mosque in Amman is hidden by a thick cover of fresh snow Wednesday as Jordan endured the effects of a blizzard that meteorologists said will last until early Friday. (Star photo by Mahmoud Shawkat)

## Netanyahu snubs Cook over meeting with Palestinian MP

British minister's visit fails to win Israel's backing for a European peace role

By Doug Struck and agencies reports

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—On a rain-swept hilltop here, Carolyn Duley summoned her energy to greet Robin Cook, the British foreign secretary. She banged on a pot, blew a whistle and screamed as loud as she could: "Cook. Go Home!"

The foreign minister got the message. Israelis ranging from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—who bluntly snubbed him for dinner—to housewives banging cooking pots made Cook an unwelcome guest during his brief stop to promote a European Middle East peace effort. Netanyahu also used the occasion to reiterate Israel's claim to all of Jerusalem, including the east side, which has been under occupation since it was captured from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War.

Cook, representing the European Union, left Wednesday having succeeded in proving his opposition to Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories, but having failed in his stated desire to advance negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

The tumultuous visit is likely to guarantee further that the 15-nation European Union will have a sideline role in any renewed Middle East peace process, which is what Israel prefers in any case, seeing the EU as too friendly to the Palestinians.

Both sides were unapologetic after a day of bickering through spokesmen.

"The only person who took sanctions tonight is Bibi Netanyahu," Cook said at a press conference Tuesday evening in response to a question about theoretical sanctions against Israel for its settlement construction. "I wanted to provide a symbolic visit to underline the extent that the expansion of settlements undermines the peace process."

"It's very difficult to us to consider Europe, the European community, or in particular Mr Cook's position as representing fair mediation, when they are practically indistinguishable from Palestinian demands," Netanyahu's media adviser, David Bar-Ilan, said.

Cook caused the uproar by insisting that, with a Palestinian official, he would visit Har Homa, a controversial Jewish

settlement in an area of East Jerusalem known to Palestinians as Abu Ghneim.

"The British minister, a horse-racing fan, must have recognized the reaction: Israelis bucked like a horse with a burr under its saddle. Netanyahu declared angrily that the visit was "unacceptable." His aides hinted Britain might be left out of the peace process entirely.

Israeli legislators fumed. Jewish settlers demanded Cook be upbraided. The editorialists opened fire, and the Hebrew papers ran clucking stories about how Cook had left his wife for a former assistant (his divorce came through Tuesday). Someone sprayed graffiti on the charming old British Consulate building.

Israeli Jews were further mortified that Cook declined the usual obligatory visit to the Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem. Cook instead paid his respects at a Palestinian memorial for Deir Yassin, the scene of a massacre of Palestinians by a Jewish militia in 1948.

He pressed his anti-settlement theme at a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser

Continued on page 2

## Saving funds: Thorn in government side

By Ilham Sadeq

Star Staff Writer

THE DISPUTE over the new saving funds draft law is rapidly escalating tension between the government and the professional associations. Various economic and banking sectors are also joining the protest. (see story on business page).

The government denies that it is seeking to intervene in the management and investment of these funds and assures fund investors that its objective is to protect what it calls "small savers" from malpractice by some fund managers. But this is not accepted by professional associations officials who argue that the government's action is far too harsh and their promises to make amendments would be merely "cosmetic."

"Our stance towards this draft is clear. We see it as an obstacle to investing our funds," argues newly elected President of the Engineers Association, Mr. Huseini Abu Ghaila. He clarified that there are only pension funds in the associations, not saving ones.

"These funds' assets are invested prudently for the welfare of engineers and employees, and there is no problem investing them in profit-making areas or in managing them," he told The Star.

Mr. Abu Ghaila, who also heads the Council of Professional Associations' Presidents, calls for reversing the draft because of its negative impact on all sectors of the economy.

"Some institutions have already started to liquidate their fund portfolios while others are actively considering similar action."

The draft will have a far-reaching effect on the economy. It already had a disastrous effect on stock dealings at the AFM.

The Engineers Association had already agreed with Dr. Mohammad Saeed

Continued on page 2

## INSIDE



- Tough lady driver page 2
- Ascent to Asni pages 16
- Through Czech lens page 10

## Baghdad: daily life a daunting business

By Nora Boustany

BAGHDAD—One way to understand how Iraq and its people are living amid sanctions, deprivation and the nation's parlous status in the world is to visit Al Mutanabbi, a street here in the capital lined with the stalls of a famed open-air souk. It is a world of decay but also antiquity, of poverty but also poetry.

Lost, wrangling crowds converge to do business over heaps of scrap from abandoned lives and fragments of discarded memories. Hand-carved window panes, door knobs, used accordions and old gramophones, blackened and bent tea sets, disassembled car engines, recycled bird cages, worry beads and prayer rugs are this city's gaudy and rueful road show of past grandeur—many of the items sold by families desper-

ate for a bit more income.

"If there were an eighth day, you would find me here. Life is hard and we need the extra business," said Akram Shale, a trader, as he stood outside his stall. Boys balancing trays of sesame buns and golden pastries dipped in syrup glided past.

Iraq has faced seven years of tough United Nations-imposed sanctions that make normal commerce—and, for many people, normal life—a nearly impossible challenge. Last month, Iraqis braced for another punishing round of US-led airstrikes over President Saddam Hussein's refusal to allow inspection of suspected chemical and biological weapons sites. That immediate threat has passed, leaving Baghdad's residents to the daunting business of daily

life.

The Al Mutanabbi souk, or market, for

those who live nearby, is a focal point of that quotidian existence, a place to earn extra money, to pick up bargains, to cling to the threads of an earlier age.

Bound and tattered volumes of Reader's Digest from 1953, T.E. Lawrence's "Revolt in the Desert," 1926 edition, and a 1935 hardcover of his "Seven Pillars of Wisdom," Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" and dated textbooks on biochemistry, obstetrics, anatomy and engineering fill the stalls. Habitués with books under their arms exchange tips about their latest finds.

The street and its souk are named after Tayyeb Mutanabbi, a legendary poet whose life, death and works still haunt this city. One of his lines, in particular, is being cited these days by Iraqis: "Not everything a man longs for is within his reach, for gusts of wind can blow against a ship's desires."

Mutanabbi—the name means "oracle" in

Arabic—wrote those lines a millennium ago, in the 10th century. He was slain by assassins bent on settling a tribal feud; the killers picked him at random, unaware they were executing a renowned sage.

Bookseller Naim Shakeri shouted lines from Mutanabbi's works from his stall. "I forgive time its sins, if it maintains my friendships and safeguards books...A home without a library is an arid desert," Shakeri yelled, in melodious classical Arabic, over the din and bustle.

"I do this to make these people want my books," he explained.

Amer Khalil Abbas Naimeh, wearing a Panama hat to shield his albino skin, wandered through Al Mutanabbi playing a soothing traditional Iraqi tune on his nay, a flute carved from a hollowed bamboo reed.

A television technician during the week but no longer able to earn enough to survive, Naimeh carves nayes to sell at a dollar apiece for extra income. "I come here on Fridays to play my music and sell my

flutes," he said. "This is where intellectuals come. There is mercy here. They listen."

One of those intellectuals, a civil engineer who declined to give his name, was browsing the book stalls. "The sanctions are not about weapons of mass destruction; they are about our capability and know-how," he said of the international strictures imposed on Iraq. "You cannot stop Iraqis from using their brains. That would be inhuman."

A university student sat on a wooden chair in the sun, copying notes from an old reference book for a paper he was working on.

A popular neighborhood haunt is the Shahbandar Cafe, where people sort out differences peaceably over thin-waisted glass teacups and recline on narrow wooden benches, with chipped blue paint, under sepia photographs from the 1920s of Baghdad's wrestling teams.

Continued on page 3



## First lady of taxis holds toughest job in the world

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer

SITTING BEHIND the steering wheel, blond, wearing make-up, a red suit and black gloves, she is Jordan's first taxi driver.

Most of the world's leading news agencies—including CNN—have interviewed the 54-year-old, who holds a PhD in English literature and calls herself the mother of taxi drivers. Driving a taxi is how she makes a living and on certain days she spends 18 hours at the steering wheel.

In the beginning, the fact that a woman was driving a local taxi raised more than a few eyebrows. But with time and effort, Dr. Moyassar Abu Al-Hodha was able to gain the respect and acceptance of her peers and customers. Now, everybody bows to her, including traffic police and her fellow cab drivers who make sure to give her way with a salute.

"Our people are so kind and generous, I have never faced a problem with a passenger yet," she says.

She never hesitates to join her colleagues for coffee breaks by the side of the road or dinners at popular restaurants. After one-and-a-half years on the road, Dr. Moyassar has become a



Dr. Moyassar on the road, dreams of one day owning her own car

familiar face on Amman's highways and byways, even on the same Amman-Zarqa thoroughfare that some men drivers avoid at night.

Her eldest brother, Ali, also a driver, finds no problem with his sister being a *Shofair*, and says he has never hesitated to support her. The only thing that bothers Ali is, as he says, "that traffic police stop me and if they find a cassette player in my car they always give me a ticket, while the same is not true for my sister, although we drive the same car."

He adds that most of the time he has problems with his passengers; either they are in a bad mood or they negotiate the tariff. In response, Dr. Moyassar says she never experiences this and is treated differently. "Some people don't ask for their change, and sometimes they even tip me 2 or 3 dinars," she admits to being given a mobile phone and a number of other gifts by a passenger from Irbid.

She dreams of having her own licensed car one day, and has applied to all the proper authorities, including the Ministry of Interior, to

accomplish this, but so far has received no reply.

She also wrote a petition about the matter to His Majesty King Hussein.

The multi-talented woman has worked as a journalist for many publications in Jordan.

She also became involved in a partnership venture—a publishing and advertising agency. Unfortunately, her partners used the agency to make overseas calls and rang up a debt of some JD 17000. Needless to say, the business didn't succeed.

"My car was stolen. In it were the research materials for two books, which had taken me a year-and-a-half of investigative reporting to gather."

"As these kinds of pressures mounted, I found it increasingly difficult to meet my responsibilities; one day I was supposed to find that I couldn't even pay the rent on my office."

But her previous career as a journalist gave her many connections in the country.

While writing a book about the tribes in Jordan, she travelled the Kingdom hunting for stories and interviews. She said she is well known by most of the tribal

heads in the country.

Currently she is researching a book about the driving profession. In the book she will tackle the main problems that drivers in the country face and will relate a number of stories of adventures she, as well as other drivers, have had.

The mother of five boys and two girls, all married, she lives alone, though gathering them around her once a week remains a strong family tradition. "I love to work because I do not want to burden my sons and daughters; they have enough financial problems," she says. "As long as I am healthy I will continue to drive, work and write."

She does not advise women who have children to work outside the home. "It is hard for a mother with children to work and fulfill her duties at home at the same time, but in my case they are old enough. And so am I."

The ex-journalist cab driver agrees that her former job was a tough mission, but she believes her current one is even tougher. She says the future holds in store for her the toughest of them all.

## Sharon rhetoric spells false start to 'new beginning'

Continued from page 1

lysts say that Jordan is to blame for not comprehending fully the nature of Israeli security issues. Ghazi Al Sa'di, an expert in Israel's regional relations, believes that Jordanian officials have little understanding of both Israeli mentality and the appropriate ways of dealing with it.

He added that Sharon's statements indicate that Jordanian officials were told of Israeli intentions to make further attempts in *Yish'al*. Al Sa'di said that if this is true then it creates a problem for Jordanian officials.

Second, Israel never officially apologized for the assassination attempt. And third, Mossad chief Danny Ya'acov resigned as a result of internal differences within his agency after another covert operation in Switzerland failed, not as an outcome of the *Mish'al* affair.

However, Sa'di said it was Benjamin Netanyahu who gave the orders to eliminate *Mish'al* inside Jordan, and it is the government of Netanyahu that made the decision which gave Israel the right to strike against so-called "terrorists" anywhere in the world.

In addition, the Israeli investigation committee which was established to discuss the attempt on *Mish'al* approved the Israeli government's decision to strike against Hamas leaders and other groups wherever they are.

Dr. Husni Al Sheyab, professor of political science at the University of Jordan said, "Sharon's statements prove that relations with Jordan are not a high priority for Israel."

The new element revealed in Sharon's threats is its brazenness. In the past, Mossad conducted its operations under cover, but now Sharon seems proud to announce secret service plans and operations in advance.

"This is a new approach, a result of Israeli beliefs that Israel has reached a status quo level in both the Arab world and the world at large, and that therefore its secret service tactics are legitimate," Al Sheyab said.

For its part, Hamas threatens a massive reaction if Israel attempts to kill any of its leaders.

*Mish'al*, whose residence and phone number are unknown, released a statement recently which said, "The threats of the terrorist Sharon are a sign of weakness in the enemy [Israel] and a depressed attempt to mislead the damaged morale of its intelligence service agencies." The statement quoted *Mish'al* as saying that "These threats do not scare me and my members in the Hamas leadership. On the contrary, such threats cement our determination to continue the Jihad against occupation."

Prior to the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, Israeli intelligence claimed that it could pressure the Jordanian government, through what former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres recently called "special channels," to expel elements that were deemed a direct threat to Israeli security.

At the time these so-called "channels" were ambiguous and, after the peace treaty, they still remain undefined.

Al Sa'di believes that Jordan should invest its decent reputation in the world and among the Israeli public to pressure the Likud government in Israel.

"The Israelis consider its peace with Jordan a model one, which should extend to the rest of the Arab countries," Al Sa'di said. "If the Jordanian-Israeli peace fails, there will automatically be no hope of peace with other Arab countries. This is the pressure card which Jordan must use."

"You can not say our relations with Israel should continue 'naturally' while officials there do not hesitate to interfere in our sovereignty," Al Sa'di concluded.



Prince Hassan and Annan

## Annan praises Jordan role in region

AMMAN (Petra)—Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and Prince Sarvath accompanied UN General Secretary Kofi Annan on a visit to two Palestinian refugee camps in Amman Wednesday. Braving cold temperatures and heavy snows, the two men visited Al Hussein and Hiteen refugee camps in east Amman and toured UNRWA offices and workshops.

Annan told reporters that he supports efforts by Jordan and the UN agency to offer humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Referring to the peace process, Annan said he applauds the US mediation process between Israel and the Palestinians and called on all parties to work together in search of a permanent peace in the region.

Annan arrived Tuesday on an official visit to Jordan as part of a 10-day tour of the region. In a statement upon his arrival, Annan said the UN is working hard to promote world peace. Responding to a question regarding his visit to Jordan, Annan said that he comes to Jordan as a friend. "I came to Jordan to discuss the latest developments in the area, and to express to Jordan's leadership my thanks for the support I received during the Iraqi crisis," he added, pointing out that he carries no new initiatives.

## Khamasin and snow storms hit Jordan

Continued from page 1

sions of this sort may take place. He added that as low pressure areas move from North Africa towards the eastern Mediterranean they carry millions of tons of sand and dust as they cross the Libyan, Sahara, the Egyptian desert, the Sinai desert and finally the Negev.

Sometimes these depressions deepen, as was the case this week, as they meet with cold polar air pushing across Turkey from the North Pole

and Siberia. At that stage, the Khamasin conditions end and temperatures dip, dropping by at least 10 degrees in one day.

Al Sheyab said the current cold front has been exceptionally cold resulting in snow falls over most hilly areas in the region. He added that the same conditions occurred in March of 1943, 48, 53, 80 and 87. In March of 1948 and 1980 snow fell three times. He said in April of 1993 Jordan was also hit by a snow storm.

## Saving funds: Thorn in government side

Continued from page 1

Al Nabulsi, former governor of the Central Bank of Jordan, to evaluate its pension fund. The study is expected to be completed by the end of April.

Many other associations are also protesting what they regard as an unjustified step by the government. They argue that it is one more way to intervene in their affairs and dominate them.

Professional associations see savings funds as an "acquired right" for employees that should be managed by their own organizations and elected committees.

Rapporteur of the Financial Committee of the Lower House Munir Sobar told *The Star* that "linking the savings funds in the public sector contradicts the government's policy to privatize public corporations."

Others suggest that the government should maintain a supervisory role in the funds and not dominate them or directly intervene in their investments.

Mr. Sobar points out that while some funds' managers do abuse their position and are responsible for losses, it doesn't justify the introduction of this draft. There are other ways.

"I agree with the idea of fighting corruption and mismanagement but this draft must be rejected. I think it would have been far better if the government dealt with the issue in a more democratic manner."

Mr. Sobar maintains. He says that if implemented, the draft would wipe out the achievements of small investors in these funds, for it imposes a new income tax and registration fees while the former law doesn't.

But the voice of protest is being heard right in the heart of parliament. Some deputies rejected the draft when they met the Central Bank governor earlier this week in a session to discuss privatization.

Lower House deputy Ra'ad Al Bakri said that introducing this draft restricts the freedom of savings funds, adding that it violates the spirit of the law and constitution, which gives people the right to invest their money freely.

Jordan Lawyers Association (JLA) President Hussein Mjalli describes the draft law as unconstitutional and an assault on personal liberties.

On behalf of the other pro-

fessional associations, the JLA is working on a detailed legal memo to examine the draft and highlight its loopholes.

But the government reiterates that the door is still open for dialogue and insists that its aim is to protect the savings of employees and enhance them.

In a meeting with the press last Monday, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Information Dr. Abdullah Ensour, said that "the government has no intention to violate the law." He promised that the management of these funds will be left to their elected general assemblies and reiterated that the government's role shall be restricted to laying principles for investment policies.

He said.

## King, Clinton meeting will focus on ending tension in the region

Continued from page 1

the past was between \$20 million and \$30 million, but now we are speaking about an amount that reached \$225 million in 1998 and we hope that we can maintain this level in the coming years," Mousher said.

Spokesman for the U.S. State Department James Rubin said Tuesday that King Hussein's visit to Washington will give the American Administration the chance to closely consult with the King about the next move in the Middle East peace process.

Rubin described King Hussein as an important figure in the Middle East peace process who has worked hard to make reason and logic prevail in the region.

Rubin told reporters in the daily press release that consultations with the King will cover the Iraqi issue which clearly concerns Jordan. However, Rubin denied that there is a chance for conducting dialogue with Iraq. "There is not much that we can tell Iraq until it does what the international community asks, and this issue does not require direct dialogue," he added.

Rubin welcomed the end of tensions between Jordan and Israel that were caused by the attempt on Hamas leader Khaled *Mish'al* by Mossad agents in Amman last September. Solving this problem between Jordan and Israel is a "step forward to ease tensions and boost progress in the region," he said.

Commenting on Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon's statements on *Mish'al*, Rubin said that these statements "do not help." He added that the US does not back the methods referred to by Sharon.

Sharon was quoted by Israel Channel Two as saying on Saturday that Israel's secret service was determined to kill *Mish'al*, a Jordanian citizen, and that Israel "had informed" Jordan that it intended to finish off the job of assassinating him but not in the Kingdom.

Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour on Monday blasted Sharon's statements as rude and irresponsible. The Israeli ambassador in Amman was summoned to protest the remarks.

However, Rubin said that the US previously explained in Israel that it has the right to decide on appropriate moves to fight terrorism. "Apparently there are terrorists who seek opportunities to undermine the Middle East peace process by killing innocent men, women and children in Israeli streets. Such actions should be denounced and we have no illusions about the difficulty of fighting this kind of terrorism," he said.

## Writers Wanted

Free-lance writers required. An excellent command of the English language is a must. Experience in journalistic writing and computer literacy will be an advantage. If interested fax your C.V. to 4648298

## Netanyahu snubs Cook over meeting with Palestinian MP

Continued from page 1

Arafat in Gaza, and then strolled into the muddy construction road around Har Homa settlement in Judea. Arafat's visit to Har Homa was a surprise, as he had been avoiding the area since the Israeli cabinet secretary Danny Naveh and then crossing a military checkpoint to meet up with Palestinian legislator Saleh Tamara.

The Israelis fumed that the switch had tricked them, and that Cook had promised he would not see the settlement in the company of Palestinians. "It is not OK for a foreign minister not to carry out the agreements," Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said. UK officials said they were bewildered at the Israeli reaction to an arrangement the Netanyahu government had already agreed to. "Can a hand-

shake with a Palestinian really be the cause of such a diplomatic incident?" asked one official.

Cook insisted he had pledged not to get a briefing by Palestinians, and "I don't think anybody can describe what happened as a briefing. It was an exchange of pleasantries."

Saleh acknowledged that in the rain and crush of reporters, they had not said much. But he volunteered that "Cook showed much courage in being here."

Cook said he had come to Israel with the unanimous support of all 14 other EU foreign ministers to criticise Israel's expansion and building of settlements as the first step to relaunching the peace process.

Nabil Shaath, Palestinian planning minister, called Cook's visit to Har Homa, "I have act of defiance."

Cook's visit has raised Pal-

estian leaders' hopes that the EU can help push Washington into a bolder peace initiative.

"We think the Americans have not been fulfilling their responsibilities. But we also believe Israel, particularly after the Iraqi crisis, has more influence with the US," said Shaath.

When Cook went for a scheduled meeting with Netanyahu, the Israeli replied in kind. The private dinner with the prime minister was cancelled, they announced early; the meeting beforehand would be cut short, and there would be no ceremonial handshake for the cameras.

"I'm not sorry to have lost a dinner. I've had three four-course meals already since I came to the Middle East," Cook told reporters later. "It is something of a mercy to be spared a further full meal."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Queen Noor chairs committee

NEW YORK (Petra)—Her Majesty Queen Noor chaired a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and the Vice-Chair of the United Nations International Leadership Academy (UN/ILAI) Advisory Committee Ambassador Hishah Owaidi.

The Queen, who chairs the UN/ILAI Advisory Committee, emphasized the importance of increasing scholarship opportunities for participants from the developing countries. Norway, the Arab Bank, the UNDP and the UNFPA have offered UN/ILAI scholarships to candidates from developing countries.

The International Leadership Program is a 4-week course that will comprise interactive seminars and workshops on issues of peace, security and global leadership challenges between 60 participants selected from throughout the world and international keynote speakers.

The Advanced Leadership Program is an 8-week in-depth training program for a group of 20 participants selected from the 1997 and 1998 Leadership Program. Participants will focus on a particular global issue, take part in independent research and conclude with a thesis to be submitted to the Academy.

The International Leadership Academy, which is based in Amman, is the first global leadership training facility as well as the first UN institution to be initiated and established in the Middle East.

IN THE ALLEN CIRCUIT COURT  
CAUSE NO. 02C01-9802-DR-221  
EMAN T. ELSWERKY,  
Petitioner  
AND: NASER MARAHEL,  
Respondent

### Legal Notice of Service by publication

In Re: Petition for dissolution of marriage

COMES NOW the Petitioner, Eman T. Elswerky, and respectfully states as follows: NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the public that the Petitioner Eman T. Elswerky, has filed her Petition for Dissolution of Marriage against the Respondent, Naser Marahel, with the Allen Circuit Court, County of Allen, State of Indiana. Petitioner respectfully requests that the bond of holy matrimony be dissolved. A FINAL hearing in this matter has been scheduled in the Allen Circuit Court on the 11 day of May 1998 at 3:30 p.m.

Dated on the 11 day of May 1998 at 3:30 p.m.

Dated Feb. 26 1998

A.B.  
Lisabeth A. Blosser  
Clerk of Allen Circuit Court

Prepared By:  
Anthony T. Adoff  
Attorney 1.341.9247-44  
86 E. Berry Street, Suite 1000  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802, USA  
(219) 424-1000

## RENT ME

Possibly one of the finest & newest properties to come on the Rental Market (Construction ended on Oct. 15, 1997), located in prestigious & well-known diplomatic quarter of Abdoun or quiet road.

Build area: 600 M2 four levels (Ground + First + Roof + Basement). The offer is open for both (unfurnished or furnished) a luxurious, imaginatively & immaculate interior designed furniture.

The property has a delightful contrasting oriental arches that generates a sense of spaciousness. The entrance that takes you to an enchanting private front garden, decorated with different plants & a sensational lawn area. Once you are inside, the mosaic entrance Gallery traffic is smoothly channelled through the Villa leads you to a spacious & absolutely fabulous guest rooms, plus a most attractive dining room.

Touring the villa that is bright, sunny and airy going into the family room highlighted by an elegant fireplace at the end that lends the room a feeling of warmth and coziness. The second mosaic family entrance of that spacious living room will take you to an extensive terrace decorated with a lovely fountain.

The first floor consist of a main living room opens at the other end to an outstanding skylight that is sunny with cozy set up that can be opened to create the summer breeze.

The privately zoned sleeping wing comes with one master-suite with a dressing area, luxurious bath facilities, on addition to a two lovely general bedrooms featuring built in closets and a joint bathroom & dressing areas.

An open staircase with a contrasting cathedral ceiling that generates a sense of spaciousness leads to the roof where you will find a complete royal wing privately zoned boasting to an all around private terrace that overlook the whole of Amman area.

A tremendous kitchen that is fully equipped and highly efficient as well and has an abundance of base and wall cabinets it got a breakfast eating area and a handy grocery access to the garage. The summer kitchen serving indoor/outdoor cooking & parties held in the "Back Yard" open area conveniently adjacent to the kitchen.

The property has a basement residence. The basement has its own set up which includes an office area leading to a sleeping master wing with a bathroom. The garages, the maid's quarter, the boiler room & a complete laundry facilities & storage areas.

Rental range depends on any extra additions & number of years in contract.

### Come home to your dream home

52 Al-Alamain Street Abdoun (the same street of Ex. prime minister Kabarity), Close to South Africa Embassy. Visiting hours: between 11:30 a.m. to 4:40 p.m./daily. Call Nidal: 079 23497

Handwritten signature in Arabic script.



## JORDAN

## WEEK



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

### Deporting Iraqis denied

The Ministry of Interior is denying reports that it is deporting Iraqis from Jordan. Rumors that such a process is going on has been strenuously denied by Ministry officials. The Secretary-General of the Interior Ministry, Dr Hashem Al Sabagh told *Ad Dustour* that "Iraqi visitors entering the Kingdom have the right to residency in the country and nobody should interfere in their affairs [because] they are our guests." He added that the Ministry takes account of their special humanitarian status, and points out that there is no truth that they are deported from the country.

### Detained freed

More of those detained because of the last Ma'an riots have been released. Twenty-one people were freed earlier this week. It is understood that the rapid process of their release is due to the intervention of His Majesty King Hussein. The previous week 29 people were set free. There are now only seven still in detention, but they will be released shortly.

### Refused

It is nice to know that the issue of Arab culture is still well, alive and kicking. The Press and Publications Dept has refused entry into the country of 56 books from Israel. The reason given was the fact that these books distort Arab history and civilization. Mr Bilal Al Tal, head of the Department, is quite frank. He says that the decision to refuse the entry of the books is based on legal bases and not on the fact that they came from a particular country. He told *Al Bilad* weekly that the issue of entry is subject to the law which states that books carrying certain terms that are negative are to be refused entry into the country.

### Deputy walkout

The Lower House witnessed quite a stir earlier this week when 18 deputies marched out of the chamber. They were protesting the fact that Lower House speaker Saad Hayel Al Snor would not allow them to speak on the visit of the nine-man deputy delegation to Israel and the Knesset. The visit was condemned by the deputies, who saw it as unprecedented in the history of relations between Jordan and Israel. What angered the deputies—led by people like Abdallah Al Akaleh, Nazih Amario, Nashed Hamarneh and Mohammad Al Azaydeh—was the fact that the visit was given a parliamentary aura. They also added that the visit was against the traditions and the conventions of the Lower House, saying that such a step was "normalization" of the name of the Lower House.



Al Snor

Some surprising names were on the visitor's list, including leftist Bassam Hadadin, Ali Abu Al Ragheb, Sami Al Khasawneh, Nawaf Al-Khawaldeh, Abdallah Al Jazi, Nayef Moulah and Zeyad Al Soweikh. As a footnote to the visit, Hadadin's membership in his Democratic Unionist Party was frozen.

### Another killing

A lady living in the Hashimi area of Amman was killed by an unidentified assailant. Described as a vicious attack, she was stabbed in various parts of her body. Police later said the lady was stabbed three times in the back, for times in the chest, three times in the waist and once each in the neck and right arm. It is believed that the motive for the attack was theft.

### Skirmish in Mafraq

Four smugglers were killed, and one policeman and seven people injured during a shoot-out in the Mafraq region this week. Official sources say a unit of the Badia border patrol was fired upon by people involved in smuggling. During a fire exchange two of the smugglers were killed and a policeman injured. Later, during the burial in Umm Al Jamal, the police station was subjected to another round of shooting. In the ensuing gun battle, two of the suspected smugglers were killed, and seven innocent bystanders were injured. The incident is under investigation.

### Information Ministry gets new secretary general

There are several recent changes in the official media. Ihsan Ramzi will become Secretary General of the Ministry of Information, Nasser Joudeh will take his place as head of the Radio and Television Corp. Mr Joudeh was formerly head of Jordan Television.

### 1st lawsuit of its kind

The Press and Publications Dept has filed a suit against a foreign correspondent working for the London-based *Al Quds* Al Arabi. The first case of its kind. Bassam Badrin is being taken to court for publishing articles that the PDD says distort the "image and dignity of Jordan and harms ties between Jordan and friendly countries."

### Princess stresses role of social development

The First National Conference for Social Services was opened by HRH Princess Basma earlier this week. She told participants that it is essential to eliminate poverty in Jordan by adopting a comprehensive strategy to remove all social and economic distortions that create the phenomenon. She said that the emphasis should be on developing the nation's underprivileged areas. Princess Basma was speaking on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, and British Foreign Minister Robin Cook on Monday urged Israel to undertake "confidence-building measures" to bring the peace process with the Palestinians back on track. Prince Hassan, who met with the British minister upon his arrival in Amman on the second leg of a regional tour, said that recent violence in the Palestinian areas would endanger the peace process. "I think it is crucially important that we all develop jointly, a knowledge base of what exactly is happening in the territories and move towards the forthcoming phase of redeployment," the Crown Prince said. Mr Cook said that Jordan can play a very important role in the peace process and "we put the peace process back on track."

## Military maneuvers and alliances:

# Anani presents Jordan's case

By a Star Staff Writer

JUST ONE more headache to worry about. It's as if the region needs to increase its adrenalin levels at a time when tensions are already heightened by a flagging peace process and a worsening economic situation. The issue of military alliances in general, including the recent joint military maneuvers—and Jordan's role in them—is one that the government is keen on playing down.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Jawad Al Anani was hoping to do just that last week in an interview with Lebanese LBC TV. He said the issue of recent naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean to which Jordan participated as an observer was blown out of all proportion.

Jordan's participation in the maneuvers has been a source of political embarrassment.

The January maneuvers, code-named "Reliant Mermald," between Turkey, Israel and the US created a wave of anger in the Arab world, particularly in Syria and Egypt. Immediately afterwards there was talk of a Syrian initiative involving Iran and Russia to hold similar military exercises in the region.

Speaking on LBC, Dr Anani



Anani

said there was absolutely no need for accusations levelled at Jordan for its participation as an observer. He said, "Damascus never asked us about the nature of the participation yet was quick to point fingers."

This was the case not only with Syria, but with others. Political commentators were quick to criticize the initiative, arguing that it would be a grave threat to Arab security. Syria, whose relations with Turkey are already tense, believed that the maneuvers were aimed against it.

Some saw the military maneuvers as returning the region to an era of polariza-

tions similar to that of the 1950s, certainly a view adopted by such well-known military analysts as Mashhour Hadeetha, who at the time said that "the natural reaction would be to have a compatible alliance to face the latest challenges," i.e. an alliance of Turkey, Israel and the US.

But according to Dr Anani, the issue is much more basic. It is "the absence of dialogue between Arab capitals [that always] leads us to disillusionment."

He added that what is needed today is "the establishment of a center for conflict resolution in the region in light of the absence of any documentation of opinion, an absence that currently dominates relations between Arab states."

For example, an Arab summit that would be attended by all Arab leaders, and whose objective wouldn't necessarily be the resolution of all outstanding issues between Arab countries, would be a step in the right direction.

But again analysts see a sticking point in this. "The alliances in the region—the 'bloc' nature of their formations—is just one element. Labib Kamhawwi gives an overall view.

"It is clear that the peace process launched after the last Gulf War was also accompanied by a new outlook, a regional outlook that the Israelis called the new Middle East. It was obvious that there was a move toward formulating alliances that would exclude 100 percent, exclusively Arab alliances by introducing a non-Arab element in all cases."

He added that "Israel was designed to be a part of this," pointing out that there are many other regional military alliances under discussion.

He noted that this development is worrisome for the region, especially in that there seems to be the beginnings of a foreign strategy that is aimed at encircling the important centers in the Arab world, namely Syria, Iraq, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia. Talking about Israel on one side and Turkey on the other, the analyst believes that the Turkish-Israeli-US alliance "would encircle Syria, Lebanon and Jordan within the framework of that alliance."

# Flavor of Spain in Amman

By Natasha Tawal

Special to The Star

CULTURAL CENTERS play a pivotal role in transmitting the cultures of nations. These are introduced in such a way that they can be grasped by people from all walks of life.

One of the more active in Amman is the Spanish Cultural Center "Instituto Cervantes." Taking its name from the Spanish writer,

Miguel Cervantes, the center was established in 1991; and Lola Infantes is its current director.

In addition to teaching Spanish, the center seeks to introduce some of the distinguishing features of Spanish culture including films, plays, cultural conferences, and, most recently, a unique course in traditional Spanish dance to Jordanian society.

Sevillanas is believed to be an old dance (seguidilla). Although not originally from Seville, as the name suggests, it is most often performed in that town. Over the years the dance has become very popular, is performed by couples of all ages, and is especially

danced by girls in colorful costumes during the town's annual festival.

"La Feria de Abril" is a festival that is usually held in Seville during April and is certainly one of the highest.

Young couples have the opportunity to court, while the older people and children focus on just having fun.

It is a typically Spanish affair. The family usually goes together to enjoy the festivities and often stay till the early hours of the morning. The festival itself is highly structured and has a definite form: each of the four sevillanas contains its own three verses (coplas). The guitar sets the mood with an introductory rhythmic section and then the singer begins a short introduction called "salida" to signal the beginning of the first verse.

The verses that follow are fixed, so everyone knows when to step. This traditional dance is about romance, and

its main theme revolves around a love story that is divided into four parts. In the first dance the loves story comes to life as the couple get to know each other for the first time.

The climax of the story takes place in the second dance when the two fall in love. This is followed by the final scene. An anti-climax of sorts, the scene is dramatic when relations between the two turn into a lovers' tiff. However, in the end, the couples reconcile, and as all good endings, they live happily ever after.

Today the dance is not confined only to the town of Seville, but has made its way to disperse. Joaquin Cortes, Antonio Canales, Cristina Hoyos, Carlos Saura, are striking examples of famous Spanish dancers who have brought sevillanas to prominence.

The sevillanas course lasts for 13 weeks, said Joaquin

Calvo De Los Santos, a Sevilanas teacher at the center and a Spanish professor at the Al Isra' University. He explained that the difference between sevillanas and flamenco is that while the first is routinely confined to Seville, flamenco is a genuine traditional dance whose fathers were Gypsies who came from India and settled in the southern part of the Iberian peninsula. Mr Los Santos enthusiastically added that he will try his best to start another course after this one ends, introducing the glamour of Seville, the country where he himself comes from.

The Spanish Center doesn't stop there, but it encourages the spread of its traditional folklore by bringing to Jordan some of Spain's famous dancers and talented musicians. One example of this is the concert held last month by the Spanish flamenco guitarist Manuel Granados.



## Baghdad: daily life a daunting business

Continued from page 1

Grandfather clocks, water pipes, antique samovars, brass decanters and a sparrow in a cage are the sparse decor of the Shatbandar. There are no backgammon tables or decks of cards. Since the 1920s, men of letters have come here; now, a dying breed of wild-eyed chroniclers tracing Iraqi tribes read from handwritten books to a captive clientele, holding on to its own place in time.

The vast city around is full of contrast and paradox, half-modernized and half-antiquated, a place of flat roofs and blue-domed minarets, imposing monuments and squalid streets. A new forest of antennae and satellite dishes—part of what some people see as a tentative opening

to information from the outside world—holds up the sky over lanes still clogged by mule-drawn carts and beggars limping past open sewers.

The sanctions, which deny Iraq its major source of income—the sale of its oil reserves, now sold only in limited amounts, under UN supervision, to pay for critical necessities like food and medicine—have left Baghdad's infrastructure wanting for repairs and modernization.

Iraqis talk often about what they once had and now have lost. They know better than to wonder aloud whether the responsible party is the western alliance bent on punishing Iraq, or Saddam Hussein himself. But the rise and fall of civili-

zation to Mesopotamia due to wars, foreign domination and cultural decay is not a new theme in this land, where history stretches back to the dawn of civilization itself. In Al Mutanabbi souk, as he has for 40 years, Shatbandar bookseller continues to shout the words of the 10th-century poet.

The stallions, the night and the desert recognize me, and so does the sword, the arrow, the spear and the pen," Tayyeb Mutanabbi said to his assassins, as they prepared to kill him. "I am the one-whose literature was sighted by blind men, and whose words resonated with the deaf and dumb."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

## Returns Are Stronger

soon.



Lurie's NewsCartoon



Trying to follow in her leaders' footsteps  
(News item: Israel's election produced overwhelming odds and splinters of parties that almost guarantee forthcoming political chaos, including the confusion.)

## Our Say...

## Sharon's insulting statements

STATEMENTS BY Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon to Israeli TV last week on Mossad's intention to hunt down and kill Hamas political leader Khaled Mish'al point not only to Sharon's sick mind, but to an irresponsible and untrustworthy Israeli government as well. Jordan has every right to condemn such threats.

Sharon's statements were made few days after an important visit by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan to Tel Aviv in an attempt to reconcile relations between Jordan and Israel. The ties became tense when Mossad agents tried to assassinate Mish'al in Amman last September.

The bungled operation testified to Israel's total disregard for its peace accord with Jordan. It further brought to the limelight that country's sponsorship of state terrorism and its continuous attempts to derail the peace process.

As if to underscore Israel's lack of respect of its neighbors, Sharon's impetuous behavior, coming only few days after his visit to Jordan, blows away any remaining shred of faith in the present Israeli government.

For whether the dishonored Mossad tries to kill Mish'al in Jordan or elsewhere, the principle for Jordan is the same. As a Jordanian citizen, any attack on Mish'al is an aggression on Jordan and its sovereignty.

But what is more important than Mish'al's safety is the credibility of Israel as a state. Sharon's behavior is not abnormal in a government that has broken every promise it has made since it assumed power two years ago. Every day Prime Minister Netanyahu, just like Sharon, Eitan and others, prove to the world that, in their view, Israel is a state that is above international law, treaties and UN resolutions. Its treatment of the Palestinians through apartheid-like policies and practices accentuates Israel's position as a rogue state.

What is shameful is that the United States lacks the moral courage and will to differentiate between its policy to protect Israel as an ally, and its unconditional support of unlawful Israeli practices. If it was any other country, Sharon would be tried as a war criminal for crimes against humanity in Lebanon during the 1982 invasion of that country. In legal terms, he is no different than Serbian war criminals accused of atrocities against innocent civilians.

Sharon's statements warrant a strong reaction from Jordan. They constitute an insult and a threat to all Jordanians. We would not like to see our government satisfied with summoning the Israeli ambassador in Amman and handing him a strongly-worded protest.

We should also be prepared for the worst. If the Mossad makes another attempt on Mish'al's life, what would the Jordanian reply be?

It is now obvious that Netanyahu and his gang are not interested in peace or in improving relations with Jordan. The current Israeli government must not be given the benefit of the doubt any more than Dr Karadjic. ■

# The calm before the storm

By Christian Doumit

THE STAND-OFF between the US and Iraq has reached a point of no return. Despite the latest deal brokered by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, another crisis over arms inspection and the lifting of UN sanctions will erupt within months, if not weeks. Then, a combined US-British attack against Iraq could occur—without even a debate involving the other permanent members of the UN Security Council. Whether or not it is declared openly, a most important objective of the attack would be to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from his leadership position. Meanwhile, the US continues its troop build-up in the Gulf to consolidate its offensive capabilities.

In the US, many influential figures and political commentators have concluded that an attack on Iraq is inevitable. According to an article in the *International Herald Tribune* of 28 February 1998, Jim Hoagland wrote that President Clinton and Saddam "are on irreconcilable paths" and that "showdown is still to come." Former Secretary of State James Baker, who the Clinton Administration to launch Desert Storm II against Saddam. He wrote in a 28 February article in the *Tribune* that Clinton should make it clear to the US Congress, the American public, and Iraq that "the next time Saddam does not comply with agreements...we will react with force. The force we use will be sustained and substantial. Our reaction will not be preceded by months (or even weeks or days) of negotiations...We will use that force unilaterally if necessary." He did not, however, say what the use of force would achieve in Iraq.

In the meantime, France, Russia and China are becoming increasingly suspicious that the goal of the US and Britain is to get control of the Iraqi oil sector in a post-Saddam scenario.

These countries have reached all development deals with Iraq, to be implemented as soon as the sanctions are lifted, and they do not want to see this opportunity jeopardized. Each of these countries now says a strike against Iraq cannot be launched without consulting the Security Council. The US and Britain maintain this can be done. In light of the UN Resolution of 2 March 1998, which warns Iraq of the "severe consequences" if it once again blocks the activities of the UN inspectors.



Therefore, no matter how much the Iraqis cooperate with UNSCOM to avert a military strike, there is no guarantee that the sanctions will be lifted as there is no shortage of pretexts to keep them on. In Washington, State Department spokesman James Rubin said the release of 600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war held in Iraq was a precondition for the end to UN sanctions on Baghdad. Those releases are required by UN Security Council resolutions with which Iraq must comply to get international sanctions lifted, he said, adding, "the Iraqi regime has resorted to obstructionism and blatant denial to frustrate international diplomatic efforts to resolve the fate of the missing POWs."

The chance of a change in attitude by Iraq towards the US is unlikely, nor is the US likely to agree to a full lifting of the UN embargo if the Ba'athist structure remains in control of Iraq. A call by His Majesty King Hussein for a direct dialogue between the US and Iraq has been rejected by the Americans.

For their part, a critical factor worrying GCC states is the question of who

will pay for a future attack on Iraq. None of these countries want to take on a multi-billion dollar burden at a time when falling oil prices are set to hit their economies. The main instinct of regimes allied to the US is to assure their own survival. US policy in the region, especially the perceived double standards in its treatment of Arabs and Israelis, has weakened them while strengthening their opponents among radical Islamic groups throughout the Middle East.

This has benefited Iran, which has been implementing a careful diplomacy to rebuild ties with the GCC countries. Former Iranian President Rafsanjani made a long visit to Saudi Arabia in late February during which he met King Fahd—an honor which was not accorded to Secretary Albright during her "Grand Impromptu Tour" to Riyadh and other Gulf capitals to seek support for military action against Iraq. ■

The writer is an energy consultant based in Amman

Middle East  
East  
By  
Khami J...

## Communicating with our youth

DUE TO the burdens of life, and various professional reasons, we have been somewhat detached from the issues that concern our youth. Like many of our own generation, we took plenty of things for granted as a consequence. However, with a little effort and through the medium of computer communication, a totally new world has emerged on the scene that now necessitates our urgent attention.

It is striking to exchange views and ideas with a generation that has grown up with the idea of parliamentary democracy and freedom of expression, a generation that has reached maturity and adulthood under the circumstances of peace with Israel, but at the same time the humiliation of the Iraqi people. In other words, a generation unfamiliar with our politicians, thinkers, and communicators.

The rapid qualitative changes affecting the circumstances of the new generations do not seem to settle well in the calculations of the policy formulators and decision makers. Just as the newspapers are the domain of our established columnists, computer communication has become the forum of our youth's self-expression. Although this particular cross-section of youngsters may not be representative in socio-economic terms (they can afford computers and accessories), one feels that they do reflect the general outlook of a whole up and coming adult generation.

To put it bluntly, one discovers that there is a serious lack of communication between officialdom and the young through the electronic medium. With all the efforts of promoting awareness regarding civilizational, cultural and political issues, the filtering down effect is negligible. The terminology used by the young indicates plenty of suspicion and distrust of every notion available.

All those terms that one would have thought have been relegated to the obscure corners of history—mainly the interchangeable use of Judaism and Israel—remain a wide currency in most of our writings. Even the people that are unconsciously resigned to the status quo share the same conspiracy theories, misconceptions, and disillusion that permeate the thoughts of many other reluctant citizens.

These youngsters have the Palestinian question as an integral part of their Jordanian identity. They take for granted their constitutional rights, with which they are very familiar, and have the courage to make moral pronouncements regarding rights and wrongs. Half-baked ideas, and unconvincing justifications do not wash well with them, for let us remember that they do expect more of life than the previous generations.

Two major issues emerge from this discussion. First, the lack of any proper medium of communication with our youth, or at least the wrong application of it. And second, the lack of a wide scale programme and personnel to deal with this issue, with clear objectives, and properly devised strategies, equipped with the necessary knowledge and correct information to counteract rumour and fallacy.

So, we can either ignore the whole issue and patronisingly laugh at our youngsters from a Keynesian premise—that we all die eventually in the long run anyway—or build a nation for ourselves and our future generations, with firm commitment and belief.

The gap is widening between ideas and habits, and the question of our young people must take into account all the changes that have affected our society. Maybe plans ought to be made to start an open and constructive dialogue with them, guide their energies and channel them to the greater good of the whole nation. They are the future, and we cannot allow this future to slip away. One thing is clear: A nation is never built by negation. ■

## Letters to the Editor

## Spreading Arabic culture

To The Editor,

I WAS just reading the latest edition of your paper, having stumbled upon it via the BBC News website. I enjoyed reading it and found it very interesting.

I would like to comment on one of your stories. "Intellectuals angry about being shown on Israeli TV". I realise that a lot of people in Jordan may not be happy about having made peace with Israel, but your report seems a strange reaction to me. If Jordanian TV programs are shown in Israel, it is surely spreading Jordanian and Arabic culture to Israel,

just as one could say that the number of TV programs we all get from the USA helps spread American culture. I do not see how anyone

round. It is the same as me saying that we are exporting our culture somehow by seeing lots of American programs here.

I believe you should celebrate this opportunity for Israelis to learn more about Arabs from your point of view (not to mention the benefits to Israeli Arabs and Palestinians).

The only real issue in your report is that the people mentioned were not consulted before the Jordanian production company sold the programs to Israel.

Regards,  
Martin Davies, England  
MDavies@softwright.co.uk



An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Media Services International Info-Media.  
Editorial & Advertising: Telephones 4652-380, 4645-380, Fax 4648-298,  
P.O. Box 9313, Postal Code 11191 Amman - Jordan, email: Star@arabia.com  
URL: http://www.star.arabia.com

## Publisher &amp; Editor-in-Chief

Osama El-Sherif

Managing Editor

Dr Marwan Al Asmur

Editorial Team

Stephen Ellist (Editor), Raed Al Abed (Home News Editor),

Ihsan Sadeq (Economic Editor),

Olivier Bras (French Editor), Zeid Nasser (Technology Editor),

Management &amp; Production

Mahmoud Fares (General Administration), Qurban Hussain (Production),

Ali Nimer (Accountant), Zaki Qurhan (Layout), Mahmoud Shawkat (Archive)

The Star is serviced by LA Times-Washington Post News Service, Cartoonists International (Lurie cartoons), PANOS, The WorldPaper, Editors Press Service, STILLS and by correspondents in the United States and South Asia.  
Member of The International Advertising Association

Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 20, Arab countries US\$ 100, W. Europe US\$ 150, USA & Canada US\$ 200.

Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

# Under the skin of new South Africa

By Jeremy Gavron

AS LITERARY chronicler of apartheid, Nadine Gordimer never shied from the complexities of the old South Africa: now, in *The House Gun*, she slips beneath the skin of the new South Africa with equal sensitivity to its ironies and poignancies.

Harold and Claudia Lingard are typical English-speaking white South Africans: liberal as a doctor she lays healing hands on black bodies, but unpolitical, uninvolved. They have managed to lead their lives without reference to the violence and conflict in their country. "None of it had anything to do with them." But then one day their son is arrested for murder. It is not a political act Duncan has killed another white man over a woman but it forces the Lingards to emerge from the "security monitored compound" they have moved into from their own mental compound.

The death penalty remains on the statute books, and while his son awaits trial, Harold finds himself sitting in court with the families of two black murderers whose efforts to escape execution has become a test case. Duncan has himself appointed a black advocate, Hamilton Motsamai, and, slowly, ineptly, Harold and Claudia have to come to terms with "this stranger from the other side of the divided past. They are in his pink-skinned black hands." While it explores the politics and violence of the new South Africa the world in which a household of young men feel the need to have a gun lying around "like a house cat." *The House Gun* grips the intelligence as well as the imagination. The inversions of the past are particularly revealing: Harold and Claudia stiffly attending an otherwise black party at Motsamai's house; Motsamai caring more for the case, the cause, than his client. But Gordimer never slips into easy point-scoring, in her world nothing is black and white.

Inevitably, though, as the trial draws on, the story turns

more to the personal, to love, betrayal, families ordinary human affairs that might as well take place in South Shields as South Africa. Then Gordimer's writing becomes more ordinary too a boxer shadow boxing outside the ring.

There is something of New Labour in the new South Africa: an Oprah-esque soul-baring, a straining political correctness. Gordimer has written without apology from all sides of the race divide, but in an author's note to *Dance With a Poor Man's Daughter*, Pamela Jooste feels the need to explain at length her imperiousness at writing from a coloured point of view. Jooste's heart is clearly in the right place and her story a nostalgic portrait of the coloured areas of Cape Town that were vanishing by the Group Areas Act in the 1950s is full of authentic details and colourful characters. But somehow this first novel fails to come alive.

The old South Africa hypomised us because the repression was white-inflicted: in

black Africa tyranny has to be far more terrible and usually outlandish as well to catch our attention. More people were slaughtered in Uganda under Milton Obote, but it is Idi Amin's regime we all know about.

Giles Foden's first novel, *The Last King of Scotland*, is the story of Nicholas Garrigan, a young Scottish doctor who bandages Amin's wrist after a car accident and is appointed the president's personal physician. At first, Garrigan is amused and flattered by Amin; later he comes to see the full horror but cannot break free from his employer's grip, and remains to the brutal end.

Foden is a fine writer and a keen observer of life. A shot cow crumpling "like someone who has had to sit down because they've been told some really bad news" is one of dozens of such gems. He knows his Uganda, too, and the early parts of the book in particular add up to a potted but often fascinating picture of

the country: its diseases, history, the origins of its names, the uses of its bananas (roofing, clothes, politics, vinegar, packing material for guns and bodies).

The diversions, though, make for smoother travelling than the rockier main story. Foden's portrait of Amin is always lively and there are some wonderful moments, such as when Garrigan is pulling a baseball bat against Amin's belly to relieve his wind and the two men's ears meet: "What auricular secrets passed between us in that moment. I wonder now, what primal tympanic drumbeats?"

But what was extraordinary about Amin's murderous buffoonery was that it was real; make him even partially fictional and he becomes a cartoon character. Truth may not be stranger than fiction, but in Uganda it was strange enough. ■

Financial Times Syndication



(News item: Germany's major opposition party, the Social Democrats, chose Gerhard Schröder as its candidate for the forthcoming September national elections. He is a formidable rival to Chancellor Kohl, who's burdened by a 15% unemployment rate and a vivid image.)

For Asia's  
may



## Business scene

■ The National Portfolio made profits estimated at JD161,000 in 1997, while it suffered losses totalling JD1.3 million, for three consecutive years. Its revenue reached JD 850,000, and its investments were 44 percent in the financial sector, 33% in the industrial sector, 18% in services and 5% in insurance. The volume of its securities portfolios was JD 8.4 million at the end of last year. The company's budget was JD 9.3 million in 1997 and its shareholders' rights, JD 770 million. The company, whose capital is JD 5 million, operates as a broker at Amman Financial Market and as a consultant for investment, management and developing securities and portfolios.

■ Jordan is to host the 12th conference of Arab Economists between 24 and 25 March. Titled "Arab Economy Facing Challenges", the venue is focusing on the challenges posed by the second millennium and their impact on Arab economies. Issues for discussion include the impact of globalization on the Arab economy, privatization and the neoliberalism, the new worldwide system and challenges facing the Middle East region. Participants will also highlight means and policies to remove economic distortions, economic reform programs and their role in developing Arab economies and the role of oil in second millennium economies.

■ World Bank officials agreed to provide Jordan with a loan agreement of \$55 million. This is aimed for investment in water infrastructure and sewage development in Amman. It is hoped that the private sector will also participate in such projects.

■ The Jordanian-Bank of Development and Jordan signed five loan agreements worth \$44.15 million to finance development projects in the poor areas and improve their infrastructure. Among institutions benefiting from this financial aid are the National Aid Fund, social and housing complexes included in the social security package, technical aid for the library of the Royal Scientific Society and a loan for the Phosphate Mines Co. to enhance the productive capacity of Al Sheidiyah phosphate mines project.

### Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 18 MARCH

	Buy JO	Sell JO
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
Sfr	0.4801	0.4825
FRF	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEM	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

# Draft law sparks debate in fund, investment sectors

By Ihsan Sadeq  
Star Staff Writer

ECONOMIC AND financial circles are protesting the proposed draft law recently introduced by the government to reorganize saving funds in banks, companies and other private institutions and professional associations.

The first action was taken by the general assembly of the Arab Bank employees saving fund, which decided to dissolve the fund and liquidate its assets—estimated at JD 30 million. Bank officials criticized the draft law and said that some articles are designed to frustrate employees' hopes and restrict their rights in investing their savings.

In this respect, the Director of the Jordan National Bank, Mr. Wasif Azar said if implemented, the draft law would lead to dissolving all the saving funds and would badly affect all the beneficiaries of these funds.

He pointed out that there should be greater reorganization to the operations of these funds to improve their performance.

The draft law seeks to put saving funds of private establishments and banks under the supervision of the government, public sector funds would be excluded and are the core of the dispute over the draft. Mr. Azar said that the supervision should be carried out by the funds' general assemblies and elected committees to decide on how best to invest their assets.

But government officials reply that its intervention is designed to put an end to corruption and malpractice in the handling of these funds.

But this is totally rejected. Mr. Azar confirmed that all companies reject the draft law and said there are already legal ways to punish those involved in such practices.

For his part, Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez said such a reaction was uncalled for and unjustified. Mr. Hafez stresses that it is still premature to pass final judgment on the consequences of the draft law and assured that still it will pass through the proper constitutional channels.

The draft law shall be discussed by all legislative parties: the cabinet, and the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament.

The minister argued that the aim behind the draft law is to protect the rights of employees, stressing that there should be a law to control funds. But why were public sector funds excluded? Mr. Hafez said that it is because they are subject to accountability and surveillance from the Audit Bureau.

But such a point was not taken at face value. Saving Funds officials stress that there are many cases of corruption in public funds as reported by the courts. They add that those involved in such violations, whether in the public and private sectors, should be given a heavy penalty.

While the former law exempts saving funds from income taxes and other fees, the new one doesn't. This is another point that is the subject of much criticism.

Housing Bank Executive Director Mohammad Abu Zaid said that if approved the draft law would lead to a liquidation in the assets of savings funds. Those with savings feel that their savings will decline when other taxes and fees are imposed, and thus the main objective behind establishing them will be negatively affected.

Abu Zaid called for a prudent study of the draft law to examine its advantages and disadvantages.

But what is critical is the draft's effect on the Amman Financial Market (AFM). No sooner had stock deals boomed a week ago in light of the Anan-Iraq deal, than share dealers' hopes faded away.

The ease of tension between Iraq and the US over the inspection crisis has cast its shadow on financial dealings and stock transactions, and investors were fearful to run the risk and waited until the clouds were clear. The last two weeks saw an active share of transactions, mainly industrial shares.

But the draft law for savings funds has strongly affected the AFM and a state of chaos and anxiety prevailed. Share dealers were afraid that some funds, which invest a large quantity of their money in AFM, would be liquidated. The official index at AFM dropped about three points after the draft was proposed.

Nasir Al-Amad, a broker, called on the government to show flexibility and be lenient in consulting concerned parties to review the draft law.

Al Amad wondered about the timing of the draft law, and why the government is determined to introduce outside legislation without determining whether or not they are adequate for the country.

Some pessimists argue that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is behind it all. They say that we are assured by officials that the economic reform program launched in the Kingdom since 1989 and expected in end this year, is coming to an end and that we will have to hear further burdens as long as we let outsiders plan for us or impose their will on our economic activities.

Another investor at AFM is shocked by the fast impact of the proposed draft law on share dealings and warned that if the funds liquidate their assets, the prices of company stocks will fall, creating a new crisis at the AFM, which has recently started to prosper.

Other banks' funds have a large investments in AFM. For instance the Industrial Development Bank's savings fund of JD5 million, is mostly invested at AFM. This is added to other investments of big companies such as the Phosphate, Potash, the Jordan Oil Refinery and others. Some investors wondered what will happen at AFM if savings funds of these companies or banks are dissolved.

However, some see room for optimism.

Mohammad Al-Bilheisi, chairman of the National Portfolio and head of brokers at AFM, said that liquidation of these funds' portfolios is an unlikely possibility.

This is attributable to their experience in the market in light of a shortage of liquidity while there is high supply.

"If they liquidate their portfolios, they will face considerable losses, and this could prevent such action," Al-Bilheisi said.

He looks at the intentions of some funds to liquidate their assets as a means to send a message in the government, and register their protest against some items in the suggested draft law.

## Jordan, Germany pen new standards and certification agreement

THE JORDAN Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM), represented by General Director Mr. H. Saudi and the German Institute for Standardization (DIN), represented by a Director Dr. H. Reiblen, signed a Cooperation Agreement in January 1998 in the fields of Standardization and Certification to promote the development of scientific, technical and economic relations between Jordan and Germany. The Agreement was initiated by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) MSTQ Project to establish a National System for Metrology, Standardization, Testing and Quality Management (TQM) in Jordan in accordance with established international rules and regulations.

The cooperation agreement covers the following areas:

- Organization and establishment of a standardization system, including a public standards information point on a national level, harmonized with the European and the International Standardization Systems.
- Structure of a standardization system.
- Implementation of standards.
- Elaboration of quality management systems.
- Elaboration and implementation of a certification system for products, processes, services and quality management systems.

The aims of this agreement are:

- Exchange of documents issued by DIN and JISM in English (Standards, Catalogs, Newsletters, etc.)
- Exchange of information
- Meetings of key persons from DIN and JISM
- Meetings of experts for consultations regarding the previously harmonized issues.
- Mutual invitation of experts in seminars, conferences, as well as to lectures, training activities, etc.
- Conducting advanced training courses for the staff members in the fields of standardization, certification and related activities.

JISM is looking forward to benefiting from the DIN experience in the fields of standards and certification since DIN is one of the leading Standards Institutes in the world. DIN was founded in 1917. It initiates European and International Standards. Many German Standards became International Standards and are now applied worldwide.

The planned cooperation between the Standards Institutions of Jordan and Germany will be of importance for both partners and will assist Jordan in complying with the relevant articles of the "EU-Jordan Partnership Agreement" signed in Brussels on 24 November 1997.

## British Airways enters into alliance with Finnair

British Airways announced its link-up with Finnair, the latest step in its plans to develop a comprehensive European-wide alliance. The joint British Airways/Finnair Agreement will increase the quality of service offered to customers.

Bob Ayling, British Airways' Chief Executive, said: "With this new alliance in Scandinavia, coupled with the alliances in Germany, France and Poland which we have already established, we'll offer a genuinely seamless service right across Europe that will be renowned for its excellence. Our strategy of building a comprehensive European network will provide growth and profitability for the airline as a whole

into the 21st Century. Finnair is a fine airline, which offers excellent customer service. It is an ideal partner."

The British Airways/Finnair alliance will deliver enhanced service as well as new opportunities to earn and redeem miles for the frequent flyers of each airline. In addition, it will offer increased seating capacity and a better schedule.

The agreement comprises code-sharing on a total of 15 return flights a day between London and Helsinki as well as Stockholm, effective from March 1998. British Airways and Finnair will continue to compete on the London-Helsinki route. From May, an additional codeshare flight will

be included on the Finnair service between Manchester, Stockholm and Helsinki. Connecting passengers will enjoy improved transfer opportunities between many cities in the Nordic region and Southern Europe, the Americas as well as Africa.

Anill Potila, Finnair's Chief Executive Officer, said: "We are proud to be associated with such an excellent airline as British Airways. Finnair's busi-

ness environment has changed fundamentally during the last few years. In order to stay competitive we feel it is important to offer our customers the services of a global airline."

## Prince Abdullah opens King Hussein Bridge Duty Free outlet



HRH Prince Abdullah bin Al Hussein officially opened the King Hussein Bridge Duty Free Shop on Thursday, 12 March 1998. The center is the first duty free shop to open at a border point in the Middle East.

The King Hussein Bridge Duty Free Center is one of nine duty free shops to be opened at a main border point in Jordan by the Jordanian Duty Free Co. Ltd.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior government officials, private sector dignitaries and members of the local and international media.

The King Hussein Bridge Duty Free Center is divided into three shopping areas, one for tourists in the court yard, the second at the Departure Lounge and the third in the Arrival Lounge.

The three are all fitted with shopping facilities and contain a wide range of high quality duty free products at competitive prices.

The Jordanian Duty Free Co. Ltd is a public shareholding company; the government owns 50% and the rest is owned by the private sector.

The company's Chairman is Mr. Nader Thahabi and its General Director is Mr. Hitham Al Majali.

## For Asia's ailing economies, worst may be yet to come

By Keith B. Richburg

HONG KONG—The region's currencies have largely stabilized—they are far lower in value, but no longer plummeting. Stock markets have ended their downward slide for now. Parliaments are revising laws, opening up "closed" economies and allowing foreigners larger chunks of the pie. And overseas firms are already in the neighborhood, cautiously poking through the rubble in search of bargains.

Is the worst finally over for Southeast Asia's ailing "tiger" economies? After eight months of financial turmoil, is the region now looking at recovery? Not quite, say economists and regional analysts. In fact, most warn that the worst is yet to come.

"The economic shoe is only just beginning to fall," said David Roche, chief strategist for the London-based group Independent Strategy. For one thing, he said, the region has not yet experienced the major fall in industrial production—or the widespread layoffs—expected later in the year, particularly in South Korea and Thailand as they begin to implement the painful restructuring programs mandated by their International Monetary Fund bailout packages.

"In the next three to six months, we're going to see a lot more stories about corporate failures and bank failures," said Andy Tan, general manager of the Standard and Poor's office in Singapore. "That's a foregone conclusion."

That was also the message of Thailand's prime minister, Chuan Leekpai, who said in an interview before his visit to Washington this week: "Quite frankly, no, it has not passed yet."

Gloomy statistics and forecasts seem to confirm that much more trouble is ahead. Inflation is rising—the annualized rate in Thailand is 8.9 percent, in South Korea it is 9.5 percent, and in Indonesia, it's a whopping 32 percent. Growth forecasts have been shaved across the region, with Thailand's economy now expected to shrink by as much as 3.5 percent this year. And new projections say millions more Asians will be out of work this year. In Thailand alone, unemployment is at 1.5 million and is projected to rise to 2 million in 1998.

One uncertain element haunting the region is the outlook for China, where economists and others fear a growth slowdown in the world's most populous nation could dramatically disrupt Southeast Asia's recovery efforts.

While Chinese officials insist they can achieve 8 percent growth this year, down from 8.8 percent last year, most analysts believe that is optimistic. Last week, Chinese officials said foreign investment could drop by a third, the \$40 billion trade surplus could evaporate, and millions more Chinese workers could face unemployment. Most analysts are forecasting growth slowing to 4 percent to 7 percent.

If you want financial security for your family, look to ours.

For further information please call (06) 5688816

Outstanding investment opportunities. International strength. A strong financial track record. Plus solid investment advice. It's all yours when you join the Arab Bank family. Call us today and ask to speak to one of our Investment Executives.

Arab Bank.  
Because you deserve the best





## Arab Bank Long-range plans yield stability, progress

AMMAN (Star)—The Arab Bank continues to hold a high rank and distinctive position among Jordanian banks. Its 1997 results reflect its sound fiscal status and signals its high quality service.

Last year, it recorded a significant rise, exceeding 12.5 percent in net profits to hit JD107.7 million, compared with JD95.7 million in 1996.

The Bank's chairman, Mr Abdul Majed Shoman pointed out that such growth is attributable to a 7.2 percent rise in overall revenues in 1997, reaching JD 310.8 million compared with JD 289.8 million in 1996.

It was also able to control rises in expenditures as its administrative expenses were curtailed to JD 165.2 million in 1997 compared with JD 153.7 million in the former year.

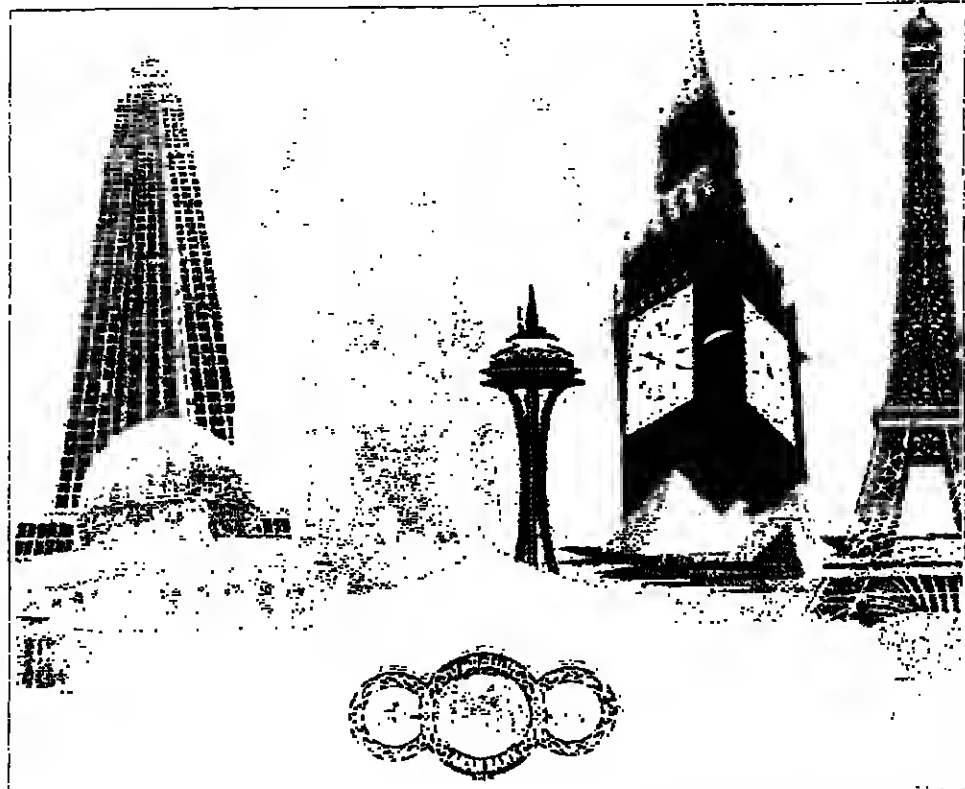
The rise in profits is associated with a 14.3 percent increase in shareholders' rights to JD 720 million, compared with JD 630 million in 1996.

Moreover, Mr Shoman, who is also the general director of the Arab Bank continued that the Bank is keen to maintain stable and sound financial resources by housing clients' deposits. These deposits amounted to JD 7.25 billion by the end of 1997, compared with JD 6.8 billion in 1996. Also the bank's lending portfolio recorded a rise to JD 4.67 billion against JD 4.16 billion in 1996.

Average of monetary liquidity at the Bank was about 51.4 percent last year compared with 55.7 percent in 1996.

The Arab Bank group also recorded a noticeable growth in its net dividends to \$220.8 million in 1997 as against \$197.8 million the year before.

Among major achieve-



ments of the Bank last year was the establishment of the Islamic International Arab Bank (IIAB), at a capital of JD40 million. The IIAB's operations focus mainly on

branches within the framework of the general strategy of the Arab Bank group.

During 1997, the Arab Bank modernized its network to keep in contact with all its major units in the world. In addition it has enhanced its data base programs and risk monitoring systems in the aim of long-term planning.

Its vice chairman, Mr Khaled Shoman, stressed that the Arab Bank's participation in the international banking scene gives its clients an opportunity to benefit from a wide range of diversified services. Such balanced and competitive involvement also enables the bank to officially manage its liabilities and assets 24 hours

a day. Generally speaking, the main objective of the Arab Bank is to maintain clients' trust.

Lately the Bank has taken a decision to raise its capital to JD 88 million, which is double its former capital of JD 44 million.

The Bank is also in the process of establishing a central treasury administration in London to be responsible for managing its assets and liabilities on the monetary market, thus provide clients with new banking services. The administration will enable clients to manage any possible financial risks in their operations, particularly risks related to fluctuations in interest rates and currencies.

Also, the Bank launched new investment funds to provide clients with opportunities to invest their money outside the monetary market.

## Mergers add up to competitive edge

EDITOR'S NOTE: Banking, financial stability and mergers are all hot topics in Jordan today. The Star talked to the Director of the Arab Academy for Financial Sciences in Amman, Dr Mustapha Hodeib, about these, and other fiscal issues that affect Jordan in this stage of its economic development. Excerpts follow:

Can you comment on the Banking Scene in Jordan?

The banking system in Jordan is composed of the Central Bank, 23 commercial banks (including the Housing Bank), three specialized banks, the Agricultural Credit Organization and other small exchange bureaus.

The Central Bank has adopted a flexible monetary policy, embarked on gradual deregulations, and encouraged the consolidation of the banking system through mergers and acquisitions. It is well-known for its quest toward monetary and banking stability, and for encouraging and attempting to fix free foreign exchange. Its sound monetary policy is implemented in positive cooperation with the International Monetary Fund.

The two largest banks in terms of total assets and equity are the Arab Bank and the Housing Bank. The latter is both a housing and a commercial bank. Commercial Banks still concentrate on short-term loans for trade, industry, construction, tourism and other services.

This does not mean that long-term project finance is not available, but its percentage of total business loans is relatively small.

Jordanian banks were able to implement the BIS ratios and some exceeded them noticeably. They are generally conservative lenders, though the banking system was not immune from instances of bank failures or problem banks.

The Industrial Development Bank concentrates on intermediate and long-term financing of industry on differing scales according to the provision of working capital. It holds a di-

versified investment portfolio and engages in foreign exchange operations. The Agricultural Credit Organization is a semi-bank, because it depends mostly on governmental financing (both equity and debt) and merger deposits.

Most of its credit extension is directed toward seasonal short-term lending. The Cities and Villages Bank is another small scale municipal bank.

The Islamic Bank of Jordan concentrates on the Islamic modes of financing and bank operations. It used to be the only Islamic bank, but 1997 witnessed the re-engineering of one acquired commercial bank (which faced financial difficulty) into an Islamic Bank. A third bank is also under establishment.

The biggest challenge facing these banks is globalization and the expected free entry of foreign banks to the local market.

How do you view the process of bank mergers? Would it likely be a good thing and if so, how?

Despite the existence of relatively few large-sized banks, the majority of Jordanian banks are small by international standards. Small scale operation does not allow these banks to introduce new products and services or operate as efficiently as might be necessary.

It seems that the Central Bank is convinced that the present number of banks is large and could be reduced through mergers and acquisitions.

Many advantages may be realized from this, among which are reaping the fruits of economies of scale, product and service innovation, computerization, and better ability to compete with global banks. Cost saving, employment of experts, economies in the use of reserves, enhanced marketing capabilities, better credit risk assessment, and improved collection techniques are only a few examples of the benefits of bank mergers. Again, wider correspondent relationships could

be arranged, larger loans could be extended with acceptable equity, deposit and asset ratios.

On the other hand, extensive bank empire building, especially through holding companies, could lead to monopolies and reduced competition. This danger is lessened now because of the free entry of global banks and the keen competition they offer to local banks.

In terms of globalization, is the banking sector prepared to face the challenges of international financial institutions?

This is the biggest challenge ever faced by Jordanian banks. They used to operate in a competitively safe environment. But they are going to face fierce competition especially after the recent liberalization of financial services by WTO.

Extensive re-engineering is

required to the structure, operation, human resources, products, services and above all managerial talent and mentality. These banks, especially when merged into larger units, could compete, if they could offer parallel services to their customers. Although the local clientele is not sophisticated, global bank marketing strategies could make their more efficient services extremely attractive for both wholesale and retail customers.

Banks are advised to embark on an extensive scale of modern skill acquisition, both managerial and operational. This is the place of the Arab Academy, through its educational, training and consultancy services. Those banks which are open to change and innovation will be the winners while those which stand behind will lose ground in this highly-competitive, ever-changing market. ■



## ALWAYS A NEW STEP FORWARD

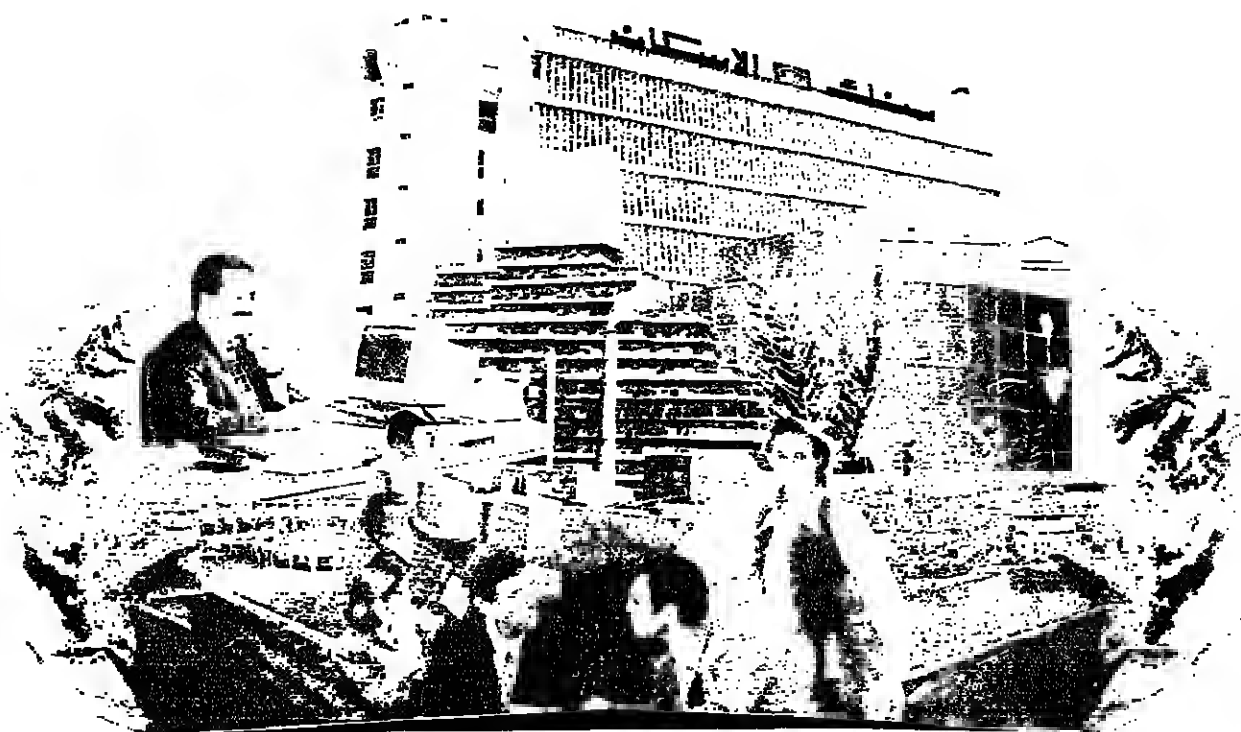
### THE HOUSING BANK

### AN INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK

The Housing Bank would like to inform the public of its relaunching as a full fledged commercial bank as of May 97 extending all commercial banking services as the rest of local, Arab and international banks.

Whatever your banking needs are, the Housing Bank has the ability and the experience to accommodate them, whether private or commercial banking.

**Our commitment to serve customers will enable us to introduce new and advanced commercial banking services in Jordan and around the world.**



بنك الإسكان  
THE HOUSING BANK  
بنك تجاري دولي  
AN INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL BANK

CITIZEN INQUIRY TELEPHONE AT THE HOUSING BANK IS (5689110)

## ADVANCED ENGINEERING GROUP

For Manufacturing Bus Stop Station  
& Advertising Panels Co.

## المجموعة الهندسية المتطورة

لصناعة محطات انتظار  
وإعلانات



نحن نقدم لكم الخدمة تزيين بيوتكم

Tel. 5515480 - 5515481 - Telefax.  
P.O.Box 841039 Amman (11184)



## New appointee to lead BritishBank toward new millenium

BRITISHBANK HELD a reception on Saturday 14 March 1998 at the Radisson SAS Hotel on the occasion of Mr Edward S. Far's retirement, and to introduce the new Deputy Chairman of BritishBank, Mr Andrew Dixon O.B.E. The reception was attended by Jordanian Government Officials, Clients of the Bank and BritishBank Executives.

Edward Far joined BritishBank in 1950 and progressed through the organization holding various posts. Mr Far was Deputy Chief Executive Officer-Jordan from 1987 until February 1998. Mr Far's valuable contribution and dedication to the Bank during his long career of forty-seven years has been reflected in the Bank's consistently positive performance.

Initially, Mr Far will maintain his association with BritishBank through his appointment as Business Advisor to the Chief Executive Officer,

Jordan, a role that will make maximum use of his wealth of experience.

Mr Andrew Dixon, the newly appointed Deputy Chairman of BritishBank joined The HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HongkongBank) in 1965.

During his career with the Bank, Mr Dixon has held a range of posts in a number of countries, including Hong Kong, Brunei, Singapore and Saudi Arabia. From 1982 until 1987 he was based in Singapore, initially as a branch manager and later as Deputy Manager Singapore and then Chief Operating Officer. Mr Dixon was then appointed Deputy Managing Director of The Saudi British Bank in Riyadh, and in May 1991 he was promoted to Managing Director.

On returning to Hong Kong in February 1995, he was appointed General Manager International, overseeing the



international branch network of Hongkong Bank outside

Finance Company Limited, Egyptian British Bank S.A.E. and British Arab Commercial Bank Limited. He is also the Chairman of HSBC Financial Services

(Middle East) Limited, the Dubai-based regional investment banking arm of the HSBC Group. He is married and has two sons and a daughter.

## Seminar clarifies credit card liability

THE LIABILITY of banks that results from the use of plastic cards are not regulated by Jordanian law. This is left to more general principles of law, mainly contract law. Because of this a degree of uncertainty as to the involved parties' liability remains.

In order to clarify the workings of credit card liability, a seminar was organized last week by the Association of Banks in Jordan at its new premises.

Main speaker Dr Fayyad Al Qudus noted that since plastic cards are widely used these days it is important to understand the nature of liability and ensure that credit card transactions are properly handled.

The seminar focused on issues relating to bank liability especially the recent increase of misuse. It was concluded that banks are not liable in ATM transactions in case of misuse, provided they can prove that the card and PIN were given to the customer. It is the duty of each customer to keep his card safe and to maintain the secrecy of its

PIN. However, the customer will not be liable if the bank is notified of the loss of the card or the PIN. In credit and debit cards, it was noted that liability depends on the parties to the transaction. There are at least three such relationships: (i) the relationship between the bank and the card holder, (ii) the relationship between the card issuer and the merchant and (iii) the relationship between the card

holder and the merchant.

These relationships are regulated by written agreements which are subject to the general principles of law. The main element here is that a bank is bound to pay the merchant for the goods bought regardless whether the customer has credit in his balance, provided that the merchant has adhered to the rules of the use of such a card.

**The Star**  
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

© 4652380 © 4645380



Mr Dixon is a non-executive director of The Saudi British Bank, The Cyprus Popular Bank, Middle East

## British Bank opens branch in Ramallah, Palestinian Autonomous Area



BRITISHBANK OFFICIALLY opened a branch in the West Bank town of Ramallah, in the Palestinian autonomous area. The ceremony was hosted by Mr Andrew Dixon, Deputy Chairman, BritishBank under the auspices of President Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Autonomous Authority. President Arafat was represented by Dr. Fouad Beseiso, Governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority. The ceremony was also attended by Mr John Pascoe, CEO BritishBank Jordan and Mr Anton Lelas, Branch Manager.

Mr Dixon, who had traveled from Dubai especially for the ceremony, said: "I am delighted to officially open our Ramallah Branch. Though we have maintained a Representative Office in the

Palestinian Autonomous area since 1994, the establishment of our full branch means we will be able to provide a broader range of banking services to the local community. We look forward to participating and assisting in the development of the local economy as well as providing international standards, products and services to our customers."

The branch will provide a full range of commercial banking services including personal banking products such as current and savings accounts, term deposits, remittances and credit cards. The Branch will also offer personal banking customers the HSBC Group's Global Access International ATM card allowing holders access to over 300,000 ATMs in more than 100 countries.

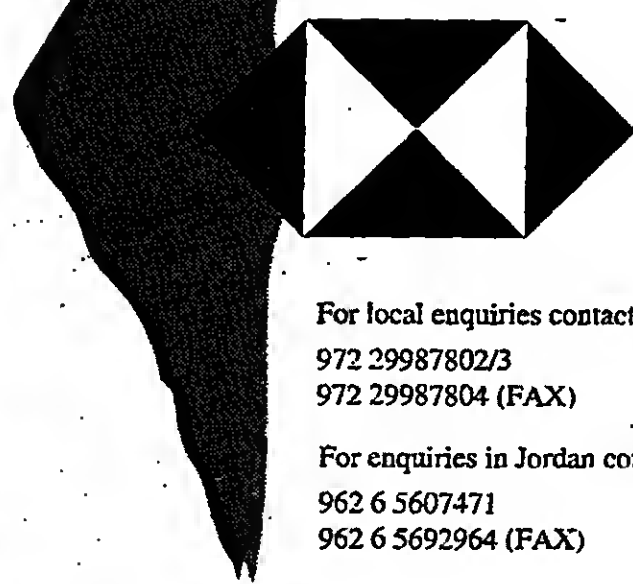
The ceremony was followed by an evening reception at the Grand Park Hotel, Ramallah attended by key Palestinian Authority officials and clients of BritishBank.

BritishBank is the largest and most widely represented international bank in the Middle East with 31 branches throughout the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Autonomous Area, and with an offshore banking unit in Bahrain. This extensive regional coverage is enhanced by its fellow HSBC associates Saudi BritishBank and Egyptian BritishBank. In addition to its Middle Eastern network, the Bank has branches in Mumbai and Trivandrum in India and Baku, Azerbaijan. It also has private banking operations in London and Geneva.

BritishBank has been a principal member of the HSBC Group since 1959. Headquartered in London with 130,000 staff in more than 5,500 offices in 79 countries and territories and assets of GBP286bn (as of 31 December 1997), the HSBC Group is one of the world's leading banking and financial services organizations. Other principal members of the HSBC Group are HongKong Bank in Asia, Midland Bank in Europe and Marine Midland Bank in the United States.



## Now in Ramallah



For local enquiries contact:

972 29987802/3

972 29987804 (FAX)

For enquiries in Jordan contact:

962 6 5607471

962 6 5692964 (FAX)

## BritishBank

are pleased to announce that their Ramallah office is now open to provide international banking services in the Palestinian Autonomous Area including Global Automated Teller Machine Service.

## BritishBank

Jaffa Street  
P.O.Box: 2067  
Ramallah  
Palestinian Autonomous Area.



## BritishBank

The British Bank of the Middle East  
Member HSBC Group

Your local global bank.

## Comprehensive & Integrated Banking Services

- Opening Documentary Letters of Credit
- Issuing Letters of Guarantee
- Accepting Deposits in different Currencies
- Granting Direct & Indirect Credit facilities to all Sectors
- Raising Safe Deposits Boxes
- Managing Investment Portfolios
- Buying & Selling Traveller Cheques
- Dealing in Foreign Currencies, (Buying & Selling)
- Contractual Saving Accounts
- Prizes for Saving Accounts
- Fast Transfer Services between Jordan & Egypt
- Issuing Credit Cards Service (Visa & National Express).
- Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Established in Jordan, 1951

Regional headquarters

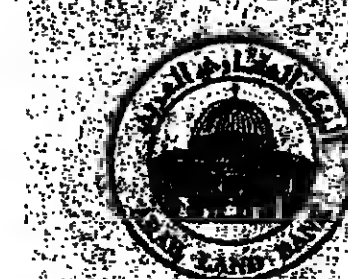
Amman, Jordan

Tel: 4616121, 4652973.

Fax: 4652975. Tlx: 21481

E-Mail: arlb@go.com.jo

S.W.I.F.T. ID: ARLBJOAM



Arab Land Bank



# West Bank simmers as Israeli crackdown continues

By Doug Struck

HEBRON, OCCUPIED West Bank—Ahmed Ali clutched a chunk of concrete and creaked his arm to throw it at the Israeli troops at the end of the block. But a Palestinian police officer grabbed him and shoved him backward to help quell the fourth day of clashes last week's shooting of Palestinian workers by Israeli soldiers.

It was only partly successful. Ali, 16, moved a few feet away and hurled the block, as skirmishes such as this, one between Palestinian youths and Israeli troops continued. Saturday, in Hebron and several other West Bank cities. There were scattered reports of injuries, none life-threatening.

A small explosion in the bus station in Alula, an Israeli town a few miles north of the West Bank, added to the tension. Israeli radio said a 53-year-old Israeli man was seriously hurt. Witnesses said they had seen him handling a cardboard box before it exploded. Authorities did not identify him.

A small bomb last Friday injured four Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

More than 60 people have been injured since the three workers were killed.

Palestinian police in Hebron and Nablus tried to dissuade the youths from hurling rocks and bottles of gasoline at the Israeli troops. They pushed youths with stones away from the troops and made no arrests.

"These are my orders. This is what I must do," said a Palestinian police officer, who declined to be named. "The rocks do no good against the Israelis and anyway, this does not help the peace."

Many of the youths took it as a game, eluding the police to launch their stones. But some were angry.

"The police have weapons. They should use them on the Israelis," complained one boy.

In a hospital room in the Al Ahli Hospital in Hebron, Sameh Bassem Karami lay as evidence that the skirmishes can be deadly. Karami, 13, was shot in the forehead with a rubber-coated metal slug. The only evidence of life was the weak blips on the monitor above his head, beside which his young friends had placed a Palestinian flag. Hospital officials said he is brain dead and will be removed from the respirator eventually.

"He was just coming from school," said his grandfather, Abdul Khad Karami. "These stones are no match for weapons."

This Saturday, Israeli troops fired rubber-coated slugs when youths rushed past Palestinian police officers and stormed toward their guard posts.

Although Israel turned over most of Hebron to the Palestinian Authority in January 1996, it maintains troops in the center of the city to guard a small community of Jewish settlers who refuse to move.



A Palestinian policeman tells Israeli soldiers not to shoot at youths in Bethlehem, Saturday.

Last Friday night, the soldiers failed to stop settlers from marching into a Palestinian area, and then fired at the Palestinians, including a group of Palestinian journalists. Eight journalists and six others were injured.

The soldiers would not discuss the matter. Their officers

said the soldiers could not distinguish reporters from the others at night. But Connie Mus, president of the Foreign Press Association, said the reporters were clearly distinguishable on videotapes.

Geir Furuseth, a spokesman for the six-nation team of international observers in Hebron,

faulted the Israeli Army for allowing the settlers to get past them.

"They were caught off guard, and in this tense situation, it is strange that they would allow such a thing to happen," he said in an interview in Hebron.

# Israel's nuclear whistleblower sheds solitary confinement

By John Daniszewski

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—For more than 11 years, his world has been limited to solitary confinement in a maximum-security Israeli prison.

He has been starved for conversation, his brother says, and his mind has wandered down strange alleys of conspiracy theories and become filled with paranoid thoughts after being denied normal contact with others for so long.

But that is changing. For Mordechai Vanunu, the technician who revealed details of Israel's secret effort to develop nuclear weapons. Last week, the Israeli government permitted Vanunu contact with other prisoners for the first time since he was arrested in 1986 for spilling Israel's nuclear secrets to the Sunday Times of London.

"He was very excited. He felt a certain sense of freedom," said Avigdor Feldman, Vanunu's lawyer, hours after the chief warder of Shikma Prison in Ashkelon informed Vanunu of the Justice Ministry decision.

The easing of Vanunu's isolation was hailed as a victory by his family, his lawyer and human rights activists, who have argued for years that the lengthy isolation was cruel and unwarranted punishment. "The road is still long for us, but we're happy that something finally



Vanunu

happened," said Vanunu's younger brother Meir, who has spent most of the past 11 years campaigning on Mordechai's behalf. "This may shorten the road to his freedom."

"I am happy for Israeli democracy even more than I am happy for him," said Dedi Zucker, a member of Parliament from the liberal Meretz Party who had visited Vanunu several times.

"This solitary confinement was a punishment not (ordered) by a court but by the security services," said Zucker. "I think that for us, most of all, it was a stain on the state."

According to Feldman, Vanunu declined the warden's offer on Thursday to be moved in with other prisoners. He will remain in the same cell he has occupied for years but now will be allowed to take part in social activities and to converse with other prisoners.

Vanunu's cell is 9 feet by 6 feet, with a shower and toilet and several shelves for books. Over the years, he has exercised by himself in an outdoor courtyard, with canvas sheets lining the area to shield him from seeing anyone or from being seen.

Aside from weekly two-hour visits from his two brothers and the guard who brings food, Vanunu was denied regular human contact since his arrest. The visits took place with a metal screen between Vanunu and his brothers, Meir said, and with a guard present on each side of the screen. The brothers could just manage to touch fingertips with Vanunu through the screen.

Israeli authorities previously had insisted that Vanunu's isolation was necessary to keep him from disseminating sensitive information to anyone else.

But David Bar-Illan, spokesman for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Thursday that the decision to

end the solitary confinement stemmed from a new assessment in which officials balanced the potential risks to state security against humanitarian concerns for Vanunu's health.

Bar-Illan denied that the decision had come about because of pressure from human-rights advocates. Over the years, many prominent people have lobbied against Vanunu's imprisonment, among them playwright Harold Pinter and actresses Susanah York, Julie Christie and Emma Thompson.

Vanunu is the most controversial figure in the annals of Israel's nuclear weapons program. He is considered a traitor by many Israelis for revealing state secrets but is regarded as a hero of conscience by advocates of nuclear nonproliferation around the world.

The Moroccan-born Vanunu, 43, took a job as a low-level technician at the secret Dimona nuclear research center in the Negev Desert in 1976 and worked there until 1985.

In 1986, after having been fired in part for political statements against Israeli policies, Vanunu traveled to London and, over the course of five weeks, gave interviews to the Sunday Times laying out what he knew about the weapons program to nuclear experts contacted by the newspaper.

He also turned over 60 photos that he had clandestinely taken inside the Dimona facility.

The disclosures and photos seemed to offer the strongest corroboration yet of suspicions that Israel had become a nuclear power. According to the experts who reviewed Vanunu's material, Israel could have manufactured as many as 200 sophisticated nuclear weapons.

Israel has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons. But an Israeli arsenal of as many as 100 nuclear warheads is now widely presumed to exist, according to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Vanunu was lured to Rome in 1986 by an Israeli agent. Vanunu has charged that he was drugged, abducted and taken back to Israel against his will to face a closed-door trial on charges of espionage and betrayal of his country.

Vanunu was sentenced in 1988 to 18 years in prison.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# Netanyahu may be moving toward Lebanon pullout

By John Daniszewski

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Twenty years after the UN Security Council demanded that Israel pull all of its troops out of southern Lebanon "forthwith," the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears to be getting closer to doing just that.

In what could be a remarkable initiative by Netanyahu, one that would end a painful chapter in Israel's recent history while humbling its reputation as a peacenik, Israel is discussing bringing back its troops without a formal diplomatic accord with the Lebanese government or its prime sponsor, Syria.

So far however, Syria and Lebanon remain skeptical that Israel really intends to pull out of Lebanon. Their advice to Netanyahu is: Just do it.

Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon, the former general who masterminded Israel's 1982 invasion of central Lebanon, publicly has joined the ranks of those advocating a pullback. He was expected to present his own plan to the Cabinet for Israel to make a phased, unilateral withdrawal, according to the Haaretz newspaper.

"We are ready, in stages, while monitoring the results, to carry out a withdrawal in Lebanon," Sharon told Israel's Channel 2 television Saturday.

But he warned that, if the withdrawal takes place, Israel will hold Lebanon's government responsible for any future cross-border attacks by Hezbollah or other militia groups. He

hinted that Israel would reserve the right to retaliate strongly if that happened.

Two weeks ago, Netanyahu announced for the first time that Israel is willing to withdraw its troops based on UN Security Council Resolution 425, the March 19, 1978, directive telling Israel to leave Lebanon and to respect Lebanese borders and sovereignty. But Netanyahu's offer was conditional: "If the Lebanese government cooperates with us in the establishment of appropriate security arrangements."

According to government officials, Israel wants assurances that Lebanon's regular army will fill the void left when Israel pulls out, not the Hezbollah Shiite militia, the main group opposing Israel's 1,500 troops in Lebanon and the Southern Lebanese Army, a 2,500-member pro-Israeli militia.

Israel also apparently wants assurances that its SLA allies in southern Lebanon will not be harmed.

Lebanon and Syria so far are rejecting talks with Israel about any such arrangements, insisting that Resolution 425 means that Israel should pull out without conditions.

Lebanon and Syria have long insisted that Israel follow Resolution 425. And in the past, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri has made public statements similar to what Israel is now proposing: that the Lebanese government would be in charge if Israeli troops left, which would remove the reason for a nongovernmental armed resistance to exist.

French diplomats, meanwhile, have indicated privately that France might be willing to offer troops to help the Lebanese government fortify the border zone, if Lebanon and Syria eventually agree to the Israeli proposal.

The move behind Israel's new initiative appears to be growing public dissatisfaction with the country's long-term presence in southern Lebanon, a dirty war that some consider to be Israel's Vietnam.

Israeli troops entered Lebanon in 1978 to crush Palestine Liberation Organization guerrillas. Those guerrillas are gone, but the troops remain, now charged with deterring attacks on Israel's northern towns and villages by the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, which operates in Lebanon with Syrian consent.

Instead of hitting at northern Israel, the guerrillas have made Israeli soldiers inside Lebanon their focus.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

# America's business community hosts Egypt's stock exchange chief

By William B. Reinckens

USIA Staff Writer

Washington—The Chamber of Commerce of the United States hosted

Sherif Waheed Raafat, chairman of the Egyptian Stock Exchange at a business press luncheon on 12 March, where he spoke about Egypt's efforts to modernize its stock exchange and better serve domestic and international investors.

Raafat was introduced by Dr. Ahmed Shawki, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt.

"We are here to tell the true story about Egypt's private sector," he said. In 1994 the United States had only \$300 million invested in Egypt; today the investment figure is around \$1 billion, he said.

"Egypt today is open for business," "1997 was a turning point" in the investment and

modernization of Egypt's hundred-year-old stock exchange, Raafat said. He noted that in the next few weeks modern data links will be installed, a website for the stock exchange will be created, and a training center with the latest instruction in brokerage operation will begin instruction next month. All these activities are aimed at the creation of a modern infrastructure so that Egypt can attract investment at home and abroad, he added.

"Training is something that USAID (Agency for International Development) can assist us and help us with," said Raafat, noting that Egypt has a wealth of human resources to which to turn in making Egypt's modern stock exchange a regional magnet for investment.

"An investor will come where he sees liquidity," said Raafat, noting that the acronym FELT (Fairness, Efficiency, Liquidity,

and Timeliness) are essential elements in operating an international brokerage operation.

There are 300,000 accounts being handled by 30 brokers today in Egypt, Raafat said. "It's a cash market," he said, adding that Egypt's

exchange does not permit margin buying of stocks. Investors are seeing a growth rate of almost 22 percent in Egypt. This places the country in the top 15 emerging markets in the world today, he said.

"Our objective is to become the leading stock exchange in the region," he said. Raafat stressed the continual need for investor information so that the public can know about the opportunities that the Egyptian public and private companies can offer investors. "We are building a telecommunications infrastructure and financial data center" that will expand throughout Egypt, he added.

# A return to the killing fields of My Lai

By David Lamb

MY LAI, Vietnam—Nearly three decades ago, as a young reporter for United Press International, I was escorted by a squad of South Vietnamese soldiers into this Viet Cong stronghold to check out reports that U.S. soldiers had massacred hundreds of civilians.

I suspected that the reports were a fabrication. I had seen the graves in Hue, where North Vietnamese soldiers had buried 3,000 executed civilians, some with hands tied behind their backs, and I hadn't surprised me. But I didn't think the Americans were capable of cold-blooded killing because, however history may have recorded it, the vast majority of U.S. troops I had encountered were decent people and honorable soldiers.

But one by one, the peasant women of My Lai—most of the men were dead or off fighting with the VC—came forward to tell what had happened on the morning of March 16, 1968.

The 30 or so soldiers who scurried out of Huey choppers at 7:30 am were from Charlie Company of the 11th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division—later described by the U.S. Army as "a typical cross-section of American youth assigned to most combat units." They met no armed resistance, and by the time they left four hours later, they had killed 504 civilians, mostly women and children.

Ha Thi Gui spoke softly, almost matter-of-factly, on that day so long ago, never looking me in the eye. She had been herded into a ditch with 170 others and had seen the soldiers

take aim. Wounded, she survived by playing dead under a pile of bodies. Her mother, two children and three brothers and sisters were killed.

"Why did they do this?" she asked.

I came back to My Lai only two days ago, this time escorted by two government officials. Gui, now 73 and gray-haired, wears an eternally mournful expression and speaks hardly above a whisper. I am sure she did not recognize me, although she still never looked me squarely in the eye.

"We have had some Americans come back," she said, "and to tell you the truth, when I first see an American, I am terrified. I think maybe he will kill me. But then after awhile it is alright, and I know there is no danger because there is no war."

"For a long time, maybe 10 years, I could do nothing except sit and cry. I lost everything. The days were lonely. I try not to think about the killing, but living here, in the middle of where it happened, it is not easy to forget or be normal."

The curator of this living graveyard, Nguyen Thi Thao, led me through the killing fields after telling me it would be appropriate to make a small payment to anyone I interviewed and to leave a donation for the My Lai memorial. Thao, a tall, elegant woman with an air of authority, earns \$36 a month and makes ends meet by guarding the hievels of Vietnamese who while away evenings on the beach a few miles away.

My Lai is different now. There is a two-room museum and a monument to the victims and tombstones placed by the government that list the names

of the dead. The ditch where Gui lay covered with bodies has been excavated to appear as it did 30 years ago, and there are women in white "saddis"—the traditional tunic worn over pants—to guide the 4,000 foreigners and 28,000 Vietnamese who come to My Lai every year.

"We do not do this to humiliate the Americans," Thao said. "We do it so that the Vietnamese will not forget, so our schoolchildren can understand the suffering of their elders and learn from history."

The guides at the museum recounted the story of My Lai in a straightforward fashion without ideological embellishment. But time has made their memories selective. There were no Viet Cong in My Lai, they said, only peasant farmers, and when the Americans came that morning, they came expressly to kill civilians.

Actually, this area of Quang Ngai province was such a stronghold of the 48th Viet Cong Battalion that the South Vietnamese government had declared it a "free-fire zone," meaning that everyone was considered the enemy. For Charlie Company, casualties had mounted steadily in the late winter of 1968 because of VC mines, booby-traps and sniping, and when the unit was briefed by intelligence officers on the night of March 15, it was told that the

morning's mission would meet heavy resistance.

"The attitude of all the men—the majority, I would say—was a 'revengeful one,'" one soldier, Gregory Olson, told the 1970 military inquiry into the massacre. "They all felt a little bad

because we'd lost a number of buddies to My Lai."

Retired General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the allied commander in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, was a battalion commander in Vietnam at the time of inquiry. In charge of the region that included My Lai, Land mines and booby-traps, he wrote in his autobiography, continued to sap his troops' morale, just as it had that of Charlie Company.

"While I abhorred the massacre at My Lai, I could also imagine how it might have happened," he wrote. "I could read the emotions on the faces of my own men."

"If I had said: 'The people in that village obviously knew this mine was here, in fact, one of them probably planted it. Go clear the place out,' they'd have killed everyone in sight."

At the My Lai museum, amid huge photos of the massacre that appeared in Life magazine in 1969, one of the guides was telling a group of stunned visitors from the Netherlands about the United States' darkest day in Vietnam.

There were seven helicopters, and 170 people were ordered into that ditch and killed," she said, pointing to a photo. "After that, 11 were marched over here and shot.... That picture there, that's Lt. William Calley, who directed the soldiers."

Calley, an unimposing soldier whose men used to joke about his inability to read topographical maps, was convicted in a military court on 22 counts of murder. Sentenced to life at hard labor he served only three years under house arrest at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia.

Calley is 54 today, balding, bespectacled, overweight. He is married, with a teen-age son, and runs a successful jewelry store in Columbus started by his father-in-law. He does not discuss My Lai, even with friends, and continues to turn down interviews, some involving large sums of money, that precede each major anniversary of the massacre.

One survivor of the massacre, Pham Thanh, 65, head of a row of potatoes and said, no, the name Calley didn't mean anything to him. "I know of only one American from the killing who came back," he said. "It was five years ago, and when I met him, he cried. His name was Thomas and he was a hero in this village."

"Thomas" would be Hugh Thompson, a chopper pilot who flew over My Lai while the massacre was taking place. He landed and told his door gunner, Lawrence Colburn, to train his M-60 on the soldiers and "blow them away" if they harmed any more villagers. The crew flew 10 civilians to safety, pulled a bloodied baby from a pile of corpses and was responsible for stopping a killing spree that could have claimed dozens more lives. On Friday at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, Thompson, who now counsels veterans in Lafayette, Louisiana, was awarded the prestigious Soldier's Medal.

Colburn, a salesman in Woodstock, Georgia, and a third crewman, Glenn Andreotta, who died in Vietnam three weeks after the massacre, will also receive Soldier's Medals.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Under the Patronage of H.E. Mrs. Hind Sharif Nasser  
The National Music Conservatory/Noor Al Hussein Foundation

and  
The Embassy of Italy  
present



Massimo de Bonfils, violin



Annamaria Strano, piano

A concert

A concert dinner

Monday, 23 March 1998 - 8:00 p.m.  
Union Bank for Savings and Investments-Shmeisani

Tuesday, 24 March 1998 - 8:00 p.m.  
Ramona Restaurant - Jabel Amman

JD 7

JD 30

Tickets available at:  
- Air France, tel. 5666055  
- Alitalia, tel. 5689481  
- Alstar Flowers, tel. 5527695  
- Babiche, tel. 5661322  
- Caffè Moka, tel. 5926285  
- Ramona Restaurant, tel. 4644227  
- The National Music Conservatory, tel. 5687620

Luxury  
Dubai 13

Lakers

H.

Handwritten signature or mark.





## Luxury motor yachts: Dubai Boat Show '98

DUBAI—Renowned, international yacht designers are back at the Middle East International Boat Show (MEIBS) this year displaying a stunning range of luxury motor yachts. The show will run from 5-8 May 1998, hosted in Dubai at the World Trade Center with in-water exhibits at the Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club.

Taylor explained, "Exhibiting at MEIBS '98, Heesen Shipyards represent the finest of Dutch ship builders, in the class of big boats, the combi-

craftsmen, and regular exhibitors. Ajman-based Gulf Craft. The internationally acclaimed Gulf Craft will be exhibiting nine boats in-water at the Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club and four boats in the exhibition halls with their opulent show piece, the Majesty 8.



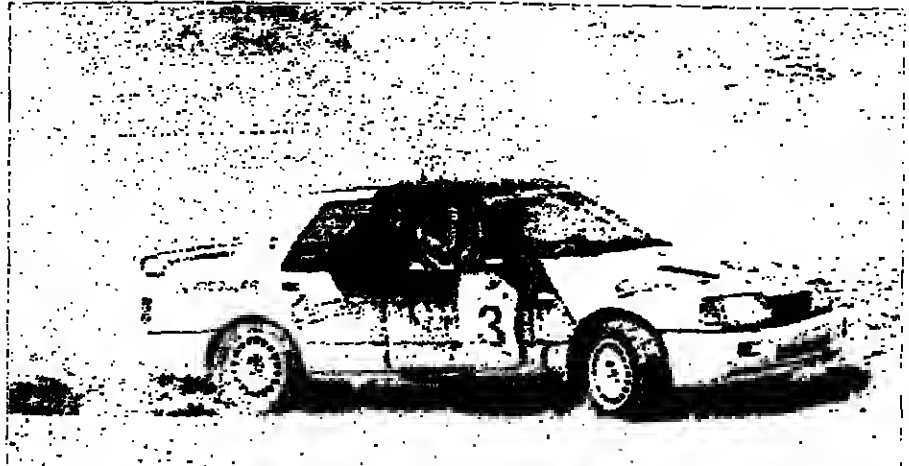
The new luxury Azimut 58, built by world renowned Azimut-Benetti Group, will be cruising its way into the exhibit. "The craft combines quality craftsmanship with state of the art technology and is designed by Italian Stefano Righini," Robert Taylor, MEIBS '98 Project Manager enthused. Other first class international exhibitors include the Dutch Heesen Ship yards who build solely for Diaship. Heesen Shipyards, for the last 30 years has constructed distinctive yachts, ranging from 46' to 165' and is currently capable of producing yachts as large as 225' in length, with both aluminum or steel hulls.

nation of quality, luxury, power and elegance is the appeal we are sure will attract local buyers." Complimenting the "big internationals" at MEIBS this year is one of the UAE's finest "big boat"

"The Majesty is an excellent combination of superior Italian design and skilled UAE workmanship and is the largest yacht ever to be manufactured in the Middle East," commented Taylor. Designed by Italian Massimo V.L. Gregori, but manufactured in Ajman, the yacht has an international look on the outside, but is completely custom tailored on the inside to cater to Arab culture, with large open spaces and light colors.

Organizers look to another successful event this year as the "big boats" on show are expected to draw large crowds, who will be curious to witness for themselves the latest in luxury yachts.

## RACJ starts season with Desert Challenge Rally



THE ROYAL Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ) kicks off the 1998 season with a 4X4 Desert Challenge Rally Tour Friday, 20 March. Twelve participants are taking part in the rally. These include Jordan's former champion Ahmad Al Dawoud, Basem Al Tarazi, Othman Al Nashashibi and Ashraf Al Shorafa. The rally, the first of its kind in five years, is on desert tracks covering sandy terrain and natural obstacles. The results will be calculated according to overall time, and speed through special stages.

## Iranians return to France after 22 years

RENNES, France—Iran, who last played in France 22 years ago, are the first of the 1998 World Cup finalists to go on a practice tour of the country ahead of the June-July tournament. The Iranians, who drew 1-1 with France in Toulouse in 1976, will play three games against French first division sides during their tour, starting with En Avant Guingamp on Tuesday.

An Iranian embassy official said Iran had chosen to spend most of their tour in Brittany because of the good economic relations the middle eastern country has with the region. Iran, in the World Cup final for the first time since 1978 in Argentina, are scheduled to play Nantes tomorrow and then travel south for a match against Montpellier on Sunday.

The arrival of the squad at the weekend has also provided the French specialist police (Research, Assistance, Intervention, Dissuasion) with a chance to put into practice surveillance measures. "For us it's a chance to hang around and test our mechanisms before the World Cup finals," commander Loic Janot said.

## MONDIAL NEWS



### Tigana front-runner to replace Jacquet

PARIS—Monaco coach Jean Tigana seems to be emerging as the front-runner to take over as coach of the French team after this year's World Cup. Coach Aimé Jacquet said earlier this month he intends to step down in July after the World Cup.

Tigana, a star of French teams in the mid-1980s, has a contract with Monaco that expires in 2001. However, reports suggest it would not be difficult for France to hire Tigana if it cited "national interest" as the reason for breaking the contract. Tigana says he hasn't been contacted yet about the job.

### Vogts happy with Klinsmann's form

FRANKFURT, Germany—Germany's coach Berti Vogts went to London to watch his struggling captain Jürgen Klinsmann, and came away happy. Klinsmann, who missed a month because of a broken jaw, has had a mediocre return to Tottenham and is struggling to regain his form three months before the World Cup. "He is at 80 percent of his potential," Vogts told Kicker magazine after watching Klinsmann score once in Tottenham's 3-3 draw with Liverpool.

"He is obviously improving. His header goal was of great class. In two, three other occasions he showed that he's getting closer to his normal ability to assert himself after breaking his jaw." Vogts has said that Klinsmann needs to play as many games as possible before the World Cup after missing part of the fall with another injury. In Ulf Kirsten and Oliver Bierhoff, Klinsmann faces tough competition to earn a place in Germany's starting lineup for the World Cup. With 18 goals a piece, Kirsten leads the Bundesliga, while Bierhoff is the top scorer in Italy's Serie A.

Germany, the reigning European champion, hosts World Cup champion Brazil on March 25 in Stuttgart in one of the biggest clashes before the World Cup finals in France.

### Gazza out with injury

LONDON—England coach Glenn Hoddle says he left midfielder Paul Gascoigne off his team for next week's friendly in Switzerland not because he doesn't want him but because of his injuries. But others suspect Gascoigne's future is dim. The injury-prone Gascoigne has suffered a series of set-backs this season at Glasgow Rangers. The club last week agreed to sell him for \$5 million to English Premier League team Crystal Palace.

The 30-year-old Gascoigne, a hero for England in the 1990 World Cup, has yet to approve the deal. "If Paul is going to be in the World Cup squad he has to be fit and playing again between now and the end of the season," Hoddle said. "He hasn't played any football for seven or eight weeks, and he has to get on with rehab work at his club to get himself fit. Paul's nowhere near that at the moment. He's overcome injuries before and shown good form, and I know he can again."

### Bergkamp starts '10-10' program

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands—Arsenal and Netherlands striker Dennis Bergkamp learned to play soccer kicking a ragged ball around the streets of west Amsterdam.

Now he's trying to make sure there are a few more fields for future soccer stars. In an effort to insure the next Bergkamp doesn't miss his calling, 10 new mini-soccer fields will be opened across the Netherlands this summer to coincide with the kick off of the World Cup finals in France. The project "10 for 10," refers to the number on Bergkamp's Dutch shirt and the number of new playing fields due to open.

### Munich's midfielder Basler misses world cup

FRANKFURT—Bayern Munich's international midfielder Mario Basler is out for four weeks with a left ankle injury, which could hurt his chance of making Germany's World Cup roster.

Basler, a talented but eccentric midfielder, has had his career interrupted several times by injuries. He has failed to establish himself as a regular national team starter, but was considered virtually a sure pick for coach Berti Vogts' 22-man World Cup squad. Basler suffered ligament damage in his left ankle during Bayern's 0-0 Bundesliga draw Saturday against Bochum.

### Top South Korean striker gets recall

SEOUL, South Korea—One of South Korea's top strikers, Hwang Sun-hong, will rejoin the national team for the 1 April game in Seoul against fellow World Cup qualifier Japan. Hwang and Choi Yong-soo are the team's best scorers. Hwang's comeback is expected to give a boost to the Korean team, which has been criticized for poor play in recent months. Earlier, South Korea came in third behind Japan and China in the four-team Dynasty Cup. The fourth team came from Hong Kong.

The loss to Japan in the tournament provoked an emotional reaction in South Korea, a colony of Japan in 1910-1945. The Korean Association received hundreds of protest phone calls. "It is an important game, maybe more for South Korea than Japan. When South Korea lost to Japan in the Dynasty Cup, the team's spirit was hurt a lot," said

# Lakers don't have look of contenders

By Alan Greenberg

THE 1980s Eastern sports press, always willing to let a misleading stereotype get in the way of the real story, loved to make fun of the "Showtime" Lakers. Whenever they came up short of the championship, they were called the "Fakers."

Nice nickname. Wrong, too. Those Magic Johnson-Kareem Abdul-Jabbar Lakers won five NBA championships in nine years. Some fakers. But now?

Take a look at their successors. (Notice we didn't say descendants?) Finally, in 1998, these are the real Showtime Lakers. Shaquille O'Neal, alias Shaq Fu, "bad actor and hard rapper," a 7-foot-1, 317-pound man who still trembles when handed the ball at the free-throw line of life. Once said he has won everywhere "except college and the pros." Last season, at 24, voted one of the 50 Greatest NBA players of All-Time, a higher joke than the dichotomy "all men are created equal."

Malone, in essence, "Don't bother setting that pick, old man, I'll handle these fellows myself." Nick Van Exel, formerly Nick The Quick, now injured (knee) and slower than the Love Boat. Moody point guard (led with coach Del Harris) and was suspended last season for drug testing. "Career" into the scorer's table. Inspired play this season was key to the Lakers' early surge, and irresistible urge to anoint them the next champions. Yeah, right after Lamar Alexander wins a charisma contest.

Eddie Jones, alias (misnomer) Steady Eddie. Kobe without the hype. Great moves, skywalks, shoots the three with impunity, but known to fade like 5,000-watt radio station at crunch time. Despite obvious abilities, offered in trade more often than World War II nylon.

One month until the playoffs, when it's show time for Showtime, and the question is: How can a team with four All-Stars—more than any team—have so few fourth-quarter answers?

Plucky Derek Fisher has done an admirable job filling in for Van Exel, but only Shaq—the Lakers' only true All-Star—has been stepping up. The Lakers signed Celtics free agent Rick Fox, 28, last summer to stabilize their young team, but one good-guy veteran is hardly enough.

Robert Horry, the starting power forward, is neither a scorer, rebounder nor intimidator and hasn't made an aggressive move since he threw a towel in Suns coach Danny Ainge's face and got himself traded to LA. Shaq has developed a turnaround jumper to go with his signature brute move to the basket and is virtually unstoppable, but with Van Exel sidelined, he's the second-best player on this team.

Risky. Thanks largely to the fastbreak, the Lakers are the league's highest-scoring team. But the essence of playoff basketball is junkyard dog defense, being able to score consistently in a half-court offense and hitting free throws. Those are Sonics and Jazz strong suits. They may have only two All-Stars a piece, but they have what it takes to send the Lakers home early again.

Sneaker commercials and dazzling moves may win the fans, but veteran teams who put aside selfishness win championships. And the young guns of the Lakers aren't there yet. Like their predecessors, they put on a great show. But when it comes to closing the deal, the similarity ends.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service



Beware of shaq's attack

By Alex Johnson

THE 10 February report that FIFA President Joao Havelange was maneuvering behind the scenes to stay in power despite his announced retirement brought a fair amount of skeptical reaction from Havelange loyalists. Well, there is, in fact, one thing I was wrong about. There's absolutely nothing behind-the-scenes about it. If there was ever any doubt, Havelange dramatically confirmed that report last week by walking out on FIFA's executive committee in the middle of a special meeting on the presidency, creating a leadership crisis that may lead to a formal vote of no confidence.

The crux of the dispute is the Havelange camp's maneuvering to puff up his deputy, General Secretary Sepp Blatter, as a candidate for president in hope of creating a deadlock that Havelange could resolve by "offering" to stay on. The front-runner and still the only declared candidate is European chief Lenart Johansson, who by campaigning for the democratization of the game has diplomatically but definitively signaled his opposition to the cult of personality that has encrusted the Havelange presidency.

## Havelange should accept the Laurel, retire gracefully

Havelange has responded in kind, and not subtly. He precipitated last week's executive committee meeting by making a series of rhetorical counterattacks against Johansson, the most recent being his declaration that he favors England's bid for the 2006 World Cup. That's a clear swipe at Johansson, who has thrown his support behind Germany's bid. Worse, Havelange all but invited England to go behind Johansson's back, saying, "Any country can present its candidacy direct to FIFA and does not have to go through the continent's federation." This is significant because FIFA guidelines in fact "strongly recommend" that national federations do work through their continental confederations.

All along, the Havelange camp has insisted disingenuously that he is retiring, on the schedule this summer, that he is taking no sides in the presidential campaign, and that he is not trying to subvert Johansson by praising Blatter, who hasn't even announced



Havelange

whether he's running. That may be strictly true; it would be awfully hard to point to a specific meeting of the Havelange cabal anywhere. But all the lobbying for Blatter I've heard comes straight from Zurich and from Havelange loyalists in the larger South American federations.

Last week's FIFA meeting was a big flashing neon sign that Havelange is on the move. It had but one item on its agenda: working out whether it was legal for Blatter to continue as general secretary if he also decides to run for president, a situation that would present the clearest of conflicts of interest. If ever there was a time for Blatter to put to rest the question whether he's a candidate, this was it. He didn't. Instead, when it became clear that the committee was going to vote against him—ruling that he would have to resign as general secretary in order to run for president—he walked out. Even more extraordinarily, Havelange walked out with him, effectively stopping the vote in its tracks because there was no one left to preside over it. Havelange's spectacular stunt made it clear not only that Blatter will run for president, but that he will do so with Havelange's active sup-

port. The idea is to divide FIFA so bitterly that the executive committee will cancel the presidential election and prevail upon Havelange to stay on in the interests of peace. Havelange's backers make a startlingly arrogant argument for this scenario. A bitter presidential campaign, they insist, should not be allowed to overshadow the World Cup.

Hello! Joao Havelange is still a colossal figure even at 82 years of age, but short of canceling it outright, there's nothing he or anyone else can do to overshadow the World Cup. To suggest that any administrative battle could possibly wrench the attention of billions of soccer fans away from the field of play is plain goofy. The proportion of worldwide soccer fans who could even name Havelange, much less Johansson or Blatter, can't be above 50 percent. It takes a great, gushing ego for a man to imagine that the question of his fate is of more moment than that of the biggest sporting event on the planet.

Not with standing all the pounding he takes here and elsewhere, Havelange has been a terrifically effective president of FIFA. What he has accomplished is truly monumental and often truly good in the most basic sense of the word—it is useful to remember the leading role he played in uniting world sport against the apartheid regime in South Africa. He deserves all the honors that have come to him, and more.

But in the last few years, it has become clear that Havelange believes soccer serves him. It always has been and always must be the other way around. The saddest aspect of this whole sorry mess is that Havelange camp fails to recognize that the finest honor he could have would be to ride off into the sunset, basking in acclaim for what stands to be the greatest World Cup ever. It is in Joao Havelange's power to accept that laurel with grace and dignity by issuing a simple one-sentence statement reaffirming his retirement. Please, Dr. Havelange, for the sake of your legacy if not for the sake of the game, issue that statement.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service





## Venue on youths issues' starts today at Sports City

PRINCESS RAHMA today, Thursday, 19 March, opens the Jordan Youth conference. The venue, which is held in the Hussein Youth City, is organized by the Building for the Future Youth Club. This also marks the occasion of the Birthday of His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, the Regent which is held on 21 March. The opening session is devoted to "readings in the thought of Prince Hassan." His Advisor Mr Michel Hamameh is going to talk about the human aspects of the Prince's personality, while Dr Ali Alqai of the Arab Thought Forum is talking about the creative side. In the second session a paper will be presented by the Minister of Labor Mohammad Al Farhan on the issue of unemployment, whether its real or is there a "shame culture" behind it. The third session is about drugs and youths. In the Chair is Col. Nazeem Al Sharaydeh of the Anti-Narcotics Dep't. while professor Musa Shteiwi in the University of Jordan will give the academic angle on the issue. ■



## History and aesthetics

# Double duty behind single lens

By Stephen Ellis  
Star Staff Writer

The exhibition at the Royal Cultural Center of two Czech photographers, Rudolf Bruner-Dvorak and Karel Smirous, presented two sets of work that were very different with respect both to their respective subjects and their styles of presenting them. However, as sharp as the contrasts between the two styles were, both shared a common theme that was not immediately apparent.

Despite the fact they worked a generation apart, photographed different subjects from viewpoints and using methods almost diametrically opposed, they share a Romantic interest in new and unusual things. In the case of Bruner-Dvorak, this took the form of an interest in such innovations as cars, tanks, and balloons as well as the lives of unusual peoples, including the Royal families of Europe as well as ethnic peo-

ple, both of whose lifestyles were no doubt fascinating to more ordinary Czechs.

Smirous' interests, on the other hand, were almost entirely with developments in the intersecting fields of chemistry, film developing and light. Although his subjects were traditional, his presentation of them was always experimental.

Both men were completely of their times: times marked by change, innovation and upheaval in realms cultural, social and political. Though each produced work far different from the other.

Both of theirs were responses to the possibilities brought by change and made evident by each in their work. They took advantage of what each of their epochs presented, and the images of these, presented in this unfortunately short-run exhibit, clash and mesh and freshen and recommend one another to a startlingly instructive degree.

Walking down the ramp into the exhibition, the first three photographs were by Smirous — large, stunningly colored still-lives of a poppy, a

the inter-relationships and delicate balance between the three — form, its defining texture and color. This clarity and balance defines the aesthetic basis of all Smirous' work, his panoramic outdoor shots of meadows and villages, sharp, snow-capped mountain peaks, portraits and intimate house interiors as well as his more formally composed still-lives.

The exhibit continued with Bruner-Dvorak's black-and-white journalistic photographs, framed in thematic groups of six. His work had an immediate and semi-mental appeal because it dealt with the curiously anachronistic facets of turn-of-the-century life.

But Bruner-Dvorak was not simply a photographer of old fashioned charm.

In addition to being one of the first photo-journalists, Bruner-Dvorak was also the personal photographer of Austrian king-to-be Ferdinand d'Este, whose eventual assassination by a Serbian nationalist in Sarajevo in 1914 led to World War I. Because of his intimate relation to the royal family, much of his work is a record of social events related to state visits by such European states as Kaiser Wilhelm, Franz Josef I and Archduke Karl Franz Josef.

Yet Bruner-Dvorak's definitive record of such events belied their grandeur. The scale of his photographs made even these powerful figures diminutive and almost non-important elements within the composition of the picture, as if the vain formality of them were factually all that was left.

It was easy — too easy — to consider whether this same reductive sense would hold true for his ethnographic records of Romanies, gypsies and, most significantly for our era, peasant life in Bosnia. These photographs, unlike Bruner-Dvorak's long-focus shots of royal visits, high class horse-races and elegant tennis clubs, revealed the palpable daily life of peasant or ethnic peoples as well as the real circumstances in which they occurred. The way he captured the very real expressions of these people as opposed to the blank faces of his official photographs of royalty makes one wonder where his true sympathies lay.

Timely images of early 20th century Czech city life also did not escape Bruner-Dvorak's

acute historical and aesthetic sense. These included the architectural pictures of iron mills and textile and cement factories in addition to the glamorous palaces built for the Prague Jubilee Exhibition of 1891, the athletic (bicycling, skating and the activities in a boxing school where, amusingly, it's a woman who's pulling no punches) and the marvels of a burgeoning age of machines (streetcars, surveillance balloons and early automobiles tooling across downtown Prague's cobblestones), as well as such ordinary work-a-day scenes as Prague firemen practicing rescue techniques.

The presentation of the show as a whole — especially the sequences of pictures pertinently arranged according to aesthetic and historical themes — was pleasing. If slightly marred by the fact that some of the work was hung too high to see in any detail. Nevertheless, Smirous' subtle colors and Bruner-Dvorak's eye for curious detail combined for an effect that was as fascinating as it was instructive. ■



By Anca de Maio  
Special to The Star

Culture serves as a bridge to bring people of the world together. On 20 March, Francophone Day is celebrated every year in France and in 50 other countries from the five continents. A tradition initiated in 1988, Francophone Day addresses not only French-speaking countries and communities but also those that show a general interest in French culture.

In many countries, the various cultural and literary activities carried out on this occasion stretch over more than one day. For the first time this year Amman is hosting a week-long program of various events organized by the French Cultural Center in cooperation with the embassies of the Francophone countries in Jordan: Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Romania, Switzerland and Tunisia.

Held at Amman City Hall in Ras Al Ain, this week's events call to attention the ever more numerous French-speaking and French-loving Jordanians. Although English remains the first foreign language spoken in Jordan, French has gained an important place in schools as well as in the audio-visual media during the last two years. Radio and TV broadcasting in French have become quite popular. Furthermore, after the introduction of French as an official optional subject in the Tawjihi secondary examination in October 1996, the number of students taking French in school has increased considerably.

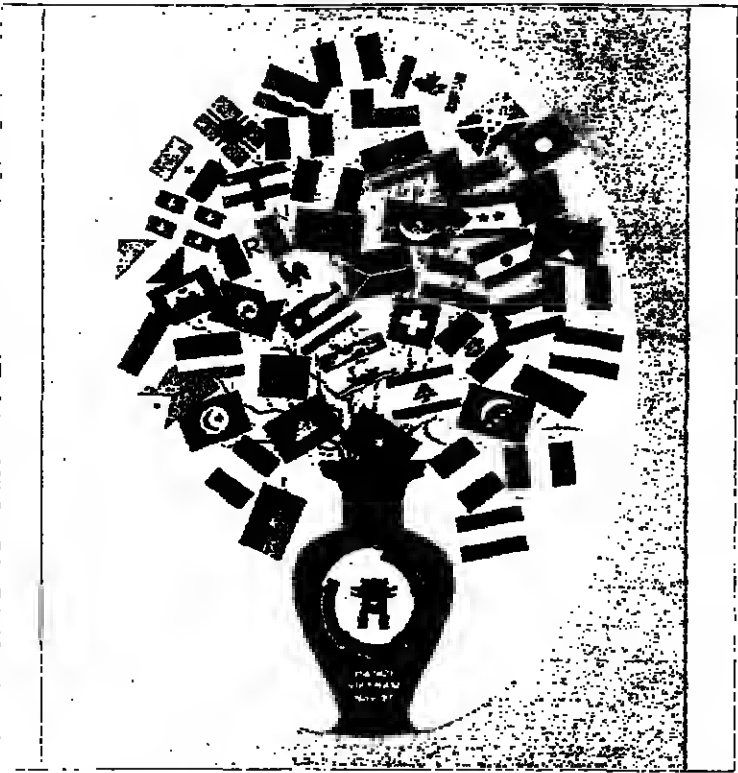
This week's program started

## Full week in French for Francophiles

with a lecture on "Francophonie, langue des autres" delivered by Lebanese poet, essay-writer, an critic and ambassador Salah Stedje. Interested in contemporary poetry, he established close contacts with French poets in the '50s. He also set up an important cultural weekly in Beirut whose role was to mediate between the latest literary innovations of the West and the new writing and thinking fashions of the Arab world. In 1995 the French Academy awarded him with "le grand prix de la Francophonie."

Last Sunday at the Meridien Hotel, Frenchman Emmanuel Bex's jazz trio enchanted the public with its original repertoire and flawless technique. Classically trained as a pianist, Bex is now a master of the Hammond organ. Also a composer and a specialist of musical arrangements, he feels particularly attracted to African music, blues and, of course, jazz.

Swiss poet and novelist



Gaston Cherpillod presented a conference on his literary work and read fragments of it to the audience. Famous for his nonconformist approach to lan-

guage, Cherpillod mixes slang and academic speech in a straightforward manner. Considering himself a scribbler forced into writing by a sort of

"social or metaphysical violence," he calls his work "disturbing." Cherpillod's writing is nourished by autobiographical experiences ranging from family and school memories to love stories and political or literary beliefs.

The last and probably most symbolic two events of the week just took place. A competition of drawings illustrating fair tales from seven different French community countries has been proposed to Jordanian students between ages 7 and 12. The illustrations judged the best will be displayed at Amman City Hall. A jury made up of representatives of nine embassies, the French Cultural Centre and the Ministry of Education will hand out prizes to the winners.

Familiarizing Jordanian children with stories from a number of different countries who share the same interest in the French language and culture is a good means of making them understand the wider interpretation of the French Community concept.

In honor of Francophone Day and the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Belgian artist Paul de Gobert has come up with a long-term project-creating a large mural fresco in the gardens of the Amman Municipality. After the wall is erected, the Belgian painter will cover it with 30 "windows" corresponding to the 30 articles of the Human Rights Declaration. By creating a double vision of two landscapes, a French and a Jordanian one, the artist intends to explain the definition of the "French community" as a virtual meeting space for people with similar manners of thinking and speaking. The fresco is due to be completed by the end of May and will be a permanent reminder of the first Francophone Week in Amman.

As pointed out by French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajelet at a press conference last week, the scope of "French Community" is not limited only to the domains of education, training, culture and communication. It also includes technical development, juridical and political cooperation. According to the Secretary General of the French Community Agency, Egyptian Boutros Boutros Ghali, events like Francophone Day are meant to prevent conflict by defending principles such as human rights and democracy, to promote cooperation with international and regional organizations, as well as to support and practice a more general plurilingualism and multiculturalism. ■

## SCRAPBOOK

By Brigitte Dounit

### Death by water

THE TITANIC has not only been described as a sensation — the most spectacular and expensive movie ever made — but also as the love story of the year. Rose is engaged to Cal, heir to an immense fortune, but she is tired of the endless trappings that an upper-class lifestyle imposes on her. Weary of fine lace and polite conversation, she sees in Jack Dawson, a young painter, an easy way out to indulge in the wilder shores of life — not quite befitting a young lady of her class and upbringing. Cal is everything a young woman could desire; he's young, dashing, debonair, and incredibly wealthy. To have him portrayed as a despicable cynic and spousal abuser is not to do him justice. But in many ways, "Titanic" is a perverse film. One can't deny that from her penniless mother's point of view it would be a very good match. A marriage arranged with proper regard to fortune, position, and social standing has every advantage over a love match. But girls don't marry because their mothers' and uncles are in favor of it. It's against this background that the producer brings to life the theme of class struggle which is central to the Titanic by creating a tale of unshakable love. Discrimination and the cruel power of money, that dare to play the hand of God are all redeemed by the love of a poor artist and an upper-class girl.

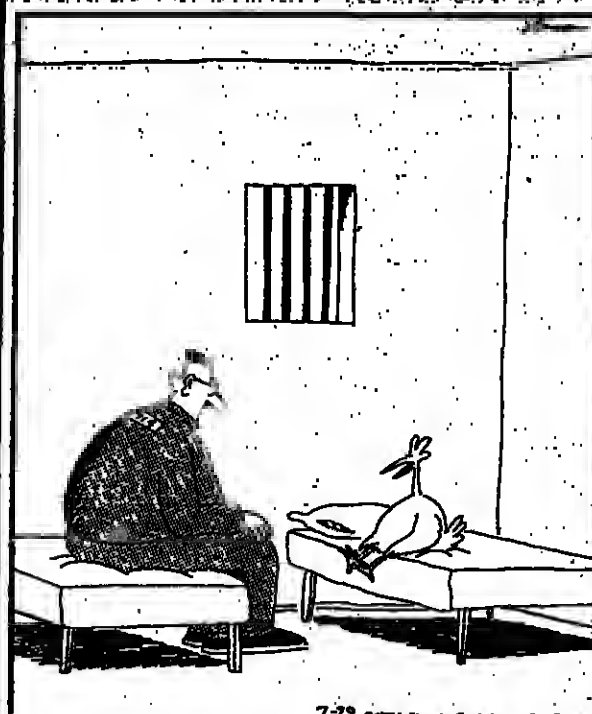
There are some cruel scenes in the movie such as when Jack gets invited to dinner in First Class as a reward for having saved Rose. He is reminded throughout dinner that he is a passenger in Third Class. There is even a reference to rats. After dinner Jack is dismissed without further ado, when the men withdraw to the smoking room for cigars and cognac. Business and politics — the affair of the powerful and wealthy — would certainly not interest him, Cal tells him. But while Cal is sipping his cognac and enjoying his cigar, Jack gets away with a bigger prize. He rescues Rose from the sullen and deadly atmosphere of First Class and takes her to the hold where the steerage passengers are having a Third World bash. As a reaction to her confinement in First Class where she has to keep all her composure, her hair comes down, her bosoms come up, her dress gets soaked and she comes to life in a frenzy of wild dance and music.

Earlier in the story, we are told that there were not enough life boats for all passengers. As the "Titanic" is sinking, despairing Third Class passengers are kept under lock to ensure they would sink with the ship rather than get into the way of those in First Class.

An impossible love that is born so suddenly can only find redemption in a frozen Atlantic. In truth, I did not panic with the thought that the ship was going to sink with so many aboard, but that this immature young love would perish without being consummated. I felt a sigh of relief when the two lovers finally merged bodies and souls in the back of Cal's car. After that, I could resume watching the movie with tranquillity and peace of mind. ■

## THE FAR SIDE

BY GARY LARSON



"So then, when Old McDonald turned his back, I took that ax and with a whack whack here and a whack whack there, I finished him off."



Red Cloud's ultimate nightmare



Call delinquents

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.



# The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV from 21-27 March

## ENGLISH PROGRAMS

**SATURDAY**  
4:00—Holy Koran  
4:10—The Hammerman  
4:30—French Program  
5:00—Canon The Adventurer  
6:00—Square One  
6:30—Neighbors  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—Discovery Magazine  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—You Bet Your Life  
8:00—Cinema, Cinema  
8:30—Prism  
9:10—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film  
12:00—Are You Being Served

**SUNDAY**  
4:00—Holy Koran  
4:10—Cartoon  
4:30—French Program  
6:00—Skipper  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—A Tour in France  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—America's Funniest  
8:00—People and Places in Africa  
8:30—Killing for a Living  
9:10—Renegade  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—North and South  
11:10—The Upper Hand

**MONDAY**  
4:00—Holy Koran  
4:10—Cartoon  
4:30—French Program  
6:00—Riding High  
6:30—Neighbors  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Hope And Gloria  
8:00—Perspective  
8:30—American Chart Show  
9:10—Marker  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Law & Order

Edward Asner in *Heads*, Tuesday at 7:35

**TUESDAY**  
4:00—Holy Koran  
4:10—CRO  
4:30—French Program  
6:00—Small Talk  
6:30—Border Town  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Pride and Joy  
8:00—What Would You Do  
8:30—Encounter

**WEDNESDAY**  
4:00—Holy Koran  
4:10—Mr. Rogers  
4:30—French Programs  
6:00—Oliver Twist  
6:30—Neighbors  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs

7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Campus Cops  
8:00—The Health Show  
8:30—Timewatch  
9:10—Kung Fu  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Elvis Island  
12:00—Country Music

**THURSDAY**  
2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—The Dinky Di's  
2:30—The Animal Show  
3:00—French Programs  
5:00—NBA  
6:00—The Burned Bridge  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Programs  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—Big Brother Jake  
8:00—Great Romance  
8:30—Lois & Clark  
8:30—Dr Quinn The Medicine Woman  
9:10—The Oprah Winfrey Show  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Feature Film  
12:00—Never the Twain

**FRIDAY**  
2:00—Holy Koran  
2:10—Teddy Ruxpin  
2:30—Wishbone  
3:00—French Programs  
5:00—He Shoots, He Scores  
5:30—Blue Water Dreaming  
6:00—Tarzan  
7:00—News in French  
7:15—French Program  
7:30—News Headlines  
7:35—F.R.I.E.N.D.S.  
8:00—Life on the Internet  
8:30—The Album Show  
9:10—Adventures of Brisco County  
10:00—News At Ten  
10:30—Drama  
12:00—Almost Home

Programs are subject to change by JTV

## Amman cinemas

- Galleria I (Tel: 079 33430): *Titanic*
- Galleria II (Tel: 079 33430): *Titanic*
- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): *G.I. Jane*
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): *Tomorrow Never Dies*
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): *Titanic*
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): *Risala Ila Al Wali (Arabic)*
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): *Long Kiss Goodnight*

## Mellow Marty talks virtue and vice

By Annalena McAfee

MARTIN SCORSESE is inscrutable, even serene. The maverick film maker has found himself in the eye of a storm and he is, uncharacteristically exuding a Buddha-like calm. As the row continues over Harper Collins' decision to cancel Chris Patten's Hong Kong book contract, another multi-million dollar corporation has been accused of distancing itself from a project which could threaten business interests in China.

The corporation is Disney, which is planning to open theme-parks in China, and the project is 'Kundun', Scorsese's latest, Disney-backed, film. Beijing warned that 'Kundun', the story of the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet, represented interference in its internal affairs and could jeopardise Disney's expansion plans. There have been suggestions that the corporation has been less than whole-hearted in its promotion of the film.

Ironically, in the US, where it opened at Christmas, 'Kundun' has been playing to full houses in New York, Chicago, and L.A. It has also been nominated for four Oscars (for Philip Glass's score, for best cinematography, best costumes, best art direction). "I don't really know what 'not performing' means. They could make the figures work for them. No matter what I say, it will sound like sour grapes."

As a film maker, Scorsese, 55, has explored more terrain than is generally perceived. There was a foray into musicals ('New York, New York'), biblical revisionism ('The Last Temptation of Christ') and, more recently, costume drama ('The Age of Innocence'). But he has been most consistently identified with his exploration of damaged and damaged machismo ('Taxi Driver' and 'Raging Bull') and with his stylish subversion of the crime genre in 'Mean Streets', set around his childhood home of New York's Little Italy, in the ironically titled 'Goodfellas', and in 'Casino'.

'Kundun' may be his furthest journey yet: from the vicious hoodlums and psychopaths of urban America to 'the reincarnate Buddha of Compassion' in his Himalayan vastness.

It's the flip side of the kind of material I've been attracted to, where the character's dark side is predominant...people who've been very physical and violent. Here is a person who is guided by religious convictions and spirituality. So will there be any cinematic heirs to Jack La Motta, the brutalised boxer of 'Raging Bull', 'Taxi Driver's' deranged vigilante Travis Bickle or 'Goodfellas' mobster Harry Hill? The only way to continue with that sort of character is self-destruction. It's more or less a dead end. You've played that out now. I see another

phase coming on," says Scorsese.

Does this new artistic phase coincide with a personal serenity? "Yes," he says. "Though maybe I'm getting older... There are times in peoples' lives when something happens, an emotion or an understanding, that is attributed totally to the spiritual plane. I'm not talking about tables levitating. I'm talking about feeling open, about feeling compassion for everyone. I know that it exists in our nature."

He is full of admiration for his cast. "It was an ensemble performance. These people were so committed to telling their story. They weren't acting, they were living. There was no artifice." In the US, some critics have condemned the film for being too passive, lacking in drama. But, says the director, "It wasn't about drama. I wanted to make a film like a piece of music, conveying the philosophy of the people, their spirituality."

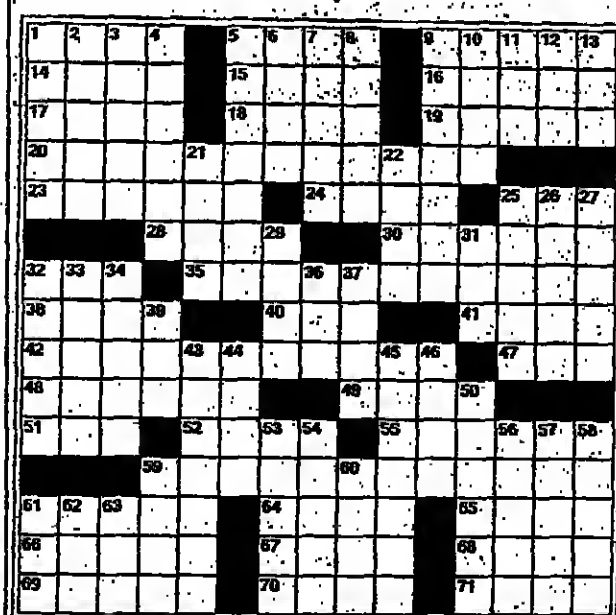
Scorsese still describes himself as a Catholic, and the ex-altar boy's fascination with ritual, with the robes and feish objects of ceremony, is apparent in the scrupulous, loving observation of Tibetan rites. "I'm not a professor of comparative religion. I can't convey the tenets of their belief, but I can convey their reverence. The more elaborate the ritual, the more powerful is the impact when it's destroyed."

Despite his presentation of the Chinese in 'Kundun' as almost gangsterish brutal villains, he insists that Chinese film-makers are now producing the best cinema in the world. "They're fresh, inventive and tell universal human stories. I want to learn something new, about film-making, about life, from films." Most American movies don't interest him. "They don't tell me anything new... a lot of these films are very topical in their humour. They have a life of about 25 minutes and then the joke is over."

He describes Quentin Tarantino, whose postmodern take on western machismo currently holds sway in Hollywood, as "a very hip guy." But Scorsese's not convinced by his approach. "Paul Schrader has said that older guys like us are on the way out because we usually deal with the existential hero, as opposed to the ironic hero of Tarantino whose motto is 'so what?' We, on the other hand, take it all very seriously. Hopefully we don't go overboard with it. But, with these characters, you can't help but take them seriously, feel for what they go through. Has the world really changed to such an extent that from now on it's all going to be 'So what? Who cares?'"

Financial Times Syndication

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



- ACROSS**
1. Battle
  2. British royal
  3. Worth
  4. Woody's son
  5. City on the Nile
  6. Mine tunnels
  7. Put on weight
  8. Lovers
  9. AAAP
  10. TV's 'Farrington'
  11. Urban unit for the 'Season'
  12. Seashore noise
  13. Toss
  14. Lopping
  15. LLLT
  16. Auldin
  17. Buildup
  18. It's mostly nitrogen
  19. Doe's mate
- DOWN**
1. CCCC?
  2. Momons, for short
  3. PDA member
  4. Next treat's opposite
  5. Congress dr.
  6. Exam for future CEOs
  7. Princess of mythology
  8. CCCC?
  9. Scruple
  10. Dumbbell
  11. Unlabeled action
  12. Follow
  13. Nevada city
  14. Ear or kettle
  15. Food carriers
  16. River to the Baltic
  17. Vipers
  18. Greek island
  19. Contest
  20. European
  21. Smiler
  22. Palatinate alternative

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

## THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

**Weekly Tip:** This is a good time to get rid of stuff. Clean out your toolbox while the moon is in Leo.

**Aries (March 21-April 19).** Romance looks good, if you can find the time. Don't ignore a project that's overdue.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20).** Watch out for breakage at home and a mate's hot temper. Romance looks excellent but a rebounder may not stick with you.

**Gemini (May 21-June 21).** Everything falls together, but could fall apart again. Don't procrastinate. A friend's assertiveness leads to a romantic adventure.

**Cancer (June 22-July 22).** Speak to an older person about having more money. Pursue a good job opportunity. You'll learn quickly, so cram as much material as possible into your brain.

**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22).** You're strongest, especially in the mornings. It looks like money's coming into your pocket. Don't make a loan to a friend with a tendency to gamble.

**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** You're having trouble with your mate. You may feel like you're being expected to do everything for everybody, and you may be right.

**Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** Take the time to be perfect. Do not hand in anything that hasn't been checked carefully. You're very imaginative.

**Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** Don't flirt at work. An older person will not be amused. Follow a whim and make a new friend. Try something you've always wanted to do.

**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** Your friends, both far and near, come through for you. Teamwork is the key to your success. Watch out for details.

**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** The work's demanding, but you can do it. The person who's ordering you around is the worst part of the problem. Commiserate with one who cares about you.

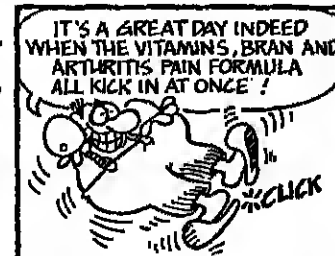
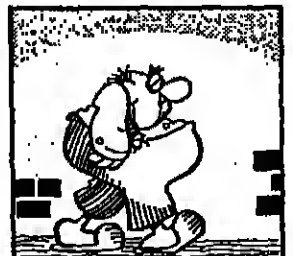
**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** Don't let a persuasive partner talk you out of your money — at least not unless you're sure it's a wise investment.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20).** If you need a job, these are good days to get one. If you've got a job, you'll be plenty busy. An argument over petty details threatens your relationship.

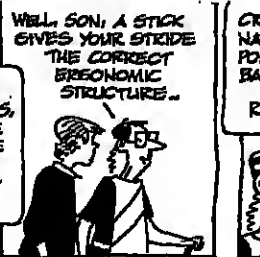
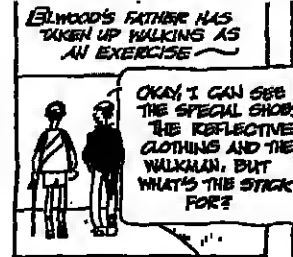
**If You're Having a Birthday This Week:** Your work finally pays off. Make the change that's required. You can get into shape this year. Let yourself be coached.

© 1998, Tribune Media Services

PERKY &amp; BEANZ by Russell Myers



ELWOOD by Ben Templeton &amp; Tom Forman



CATFISH by Fred Wagner &amp; Tom Cone



CHARLIE



"That's a very neat job of 'tar and feathering'."

Subscribe to

**The Star**  
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

P.O. Box: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Delivery Local Mail Air Mail

The Star

Tel. 652380 / 645380 Fax. 648298

P.O. Box. 9313 Amman (11191) Jordan

E-mail: Star@nets.com.jo

Jordan: JD 20 (Home delivery or by Post)

Arab countries: US\$ 100

Europe - USA - Canada - Australia: US\$ 150.

© 1998, Tribune Media Services



# Whose brainchild was Mother's Day?

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the nation and its destiny.  
South African proverb

FROM AFGHANISTAN to Costa Rica, more than 46 countries honor mothers with a special day, but not all nations celebrate on the same day. In the United States, for example, it is always the second Sunday of May. But England's Mother's Day falls on the fourth Sunday of Lent (17 March, this year). And International Mother's Day is always 11 May. In the US, there is even an official Mother's-In-Law-Day—the fourth Sunday in October.

We honor Mom with sentimental cards, potted plants, breakfast in bed, an entire day without chores...but how much do we know about the origin of this holiday?

While there is some conflicting evidence that local Mother's Day celebrations may have occurred in the late 1800's in different places throughout the United States, the idea for Mother's Day is generally credited to Anna M. Jarvis. Most sources agree that Mother's Day was first celebrated at a small church in West Virginia in 1907. It was a special service arranged by Anna M. Jarvis to honor the memory of her own mother. Seven years later, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed Mother's Day a national holiday.

History books, even the field of women's history, often overlook Anna Jarvis' one-woman crusade. Perhaps this is because women were engaged in so many other reform efforts during the early 1900s. These reforms

and the avenues they opened for women give historical context to the campaign for Mother's Day and the life of Anna Jarvis.

Women are extremely prominent in early 20th century history. For example, the National American Women's Suffrage Association's struggle to attain the vote is widely recognized, as are progressive reformers such as Jane Addams, who, with her Hull House, worked to ease social ills, particularly the woes of immigrants and the working class. In recent years, enlightened scholars have also highlighted the tireless efforts of Black women, such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell, who sought to organize both for women's rights and for the establishment of African American rights.

Many of these reformers were mothers as well as activists, but their contribution as mothers was often overlooked. The creation of Mother's Day as a national holiday restored Mom's status as a cornerstone of the family and the nation.

Anna Jarvis came of age surrounded by Progressive reform efforts. She was raised in the small town of Grafton, West Virginia (now the site of an International Mother's Day Shrine). She taught school in Grafton, cared for her blind sister and her mother, participated in the temperance and suffrage movements, and was active in the local Methodist church. When her mother died in 1904, Ms Jarvis sought a special memorial Mother's Day Service at the church. It took three years, but she eventu-

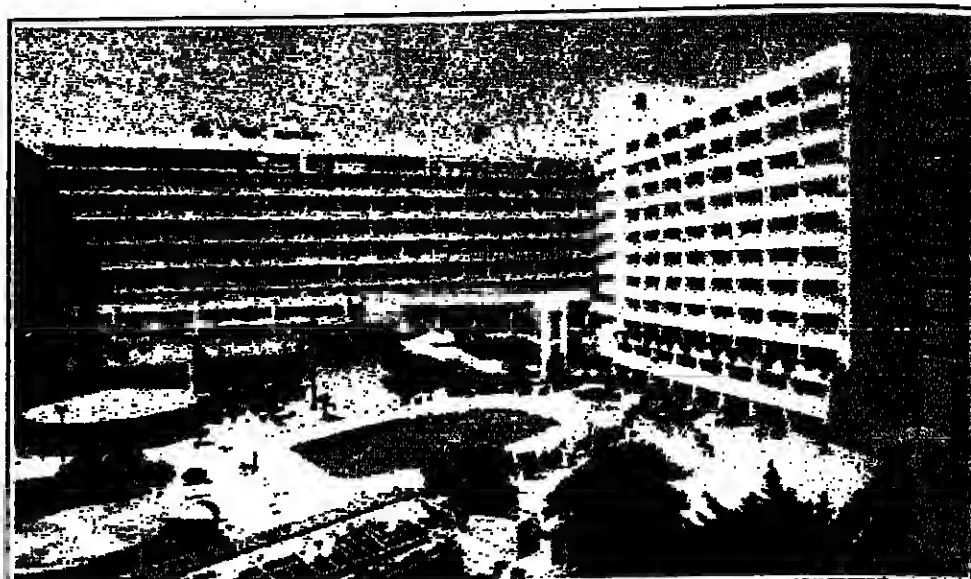
ally got her wish: the first Mother's Day service, mostly a gathering of friends and family members, was held on May 10, 1907.

The roles of women—and mothers—were changing rapidly during this period as women stepped down from the pedestals of Victorian womanhood. The Progressive Era (1900-1920), saw women emerge from the cocoon of the household into the vastness of community life. Women like Ms Jarvis explored roles outside those of housekeeper, mother, homemaker, and wife, but did not reject them. Rather, they expanded them into the public arena. "The statement that the home was a woman's sphere was not an argument against women's suffrage but in favor of it," notes feminist scholar Aileen S. Kraditor. "For government was 'enlarged housekeeping,' and it needed the real experience of the nation's housekeepers."

Ms Jarvis spent two fortunes, wrote thousands of letters to influential persons and authored many pamphlets in her effort to gain recognition for the traditional role of motherhood. Nine years after she first sought a memorial service, Pennsylvania in 1913 became the first state to declare Mother's Day a state holiday. Jarvis had moved from West Virginia to Pennsylvania in 1914 to take a position as a literary editor for a Philadelphia-based company. Congress followed Pennsylvania's lead a year later, proclaiming the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day.

Today, most of us celebrate Mother's Day with little awareness of how it began. But we can still identify with the respect, love and honor that Anna Jarvis displayed nearly a century ago. Women, especially mothers, face new challenges in society today, but motherhood remains a lasting influence on us as individuals and as a nation. ■

## 35 years of excellence in quality service



HOTEL INTERContinental Jordan celebrates its 35th anniversary today. With its fourth major expansion and renovation programme under way, the hotel continues to revive its fresh image and maintain its high standards of quality, hospitality, reliability and first-class service. Jordan's leading hotel is turning into an impressive 500-room building. With an exquisite and newly built health spa, an outdoor swimming pool, extravagant ballrooms, meeting rooms, Middle Eastern and International restaurants and cafes and other facilities, the hotel is well prepared to serve its foreign and Jordanian guests to international five-star standards. The hotel's InterFit Health Spa, which started operation in November 1997, offers the latest

state-of-the-art gym equipment, fitness classes and an indoor lap pool all aimed at improving the health and well-being of the spa's members and guests, helping them look and feel good. In House guests and InterFit members can also enjoy therapeutic massages, soothing facials and body treatments in the sanctuary of peace and tranquility.

When the hotel opened its doors in 1963, as Jordan's first five-star hotel, it had 110 guest rooms. By the end of the present renovations, scheduled for completion by the end of this year, the hotel will stand as an outstanding 500-room building with a new look, new restaurants, new shopping arcade, new underground parking facilities and new and renovated guest rooms. ■

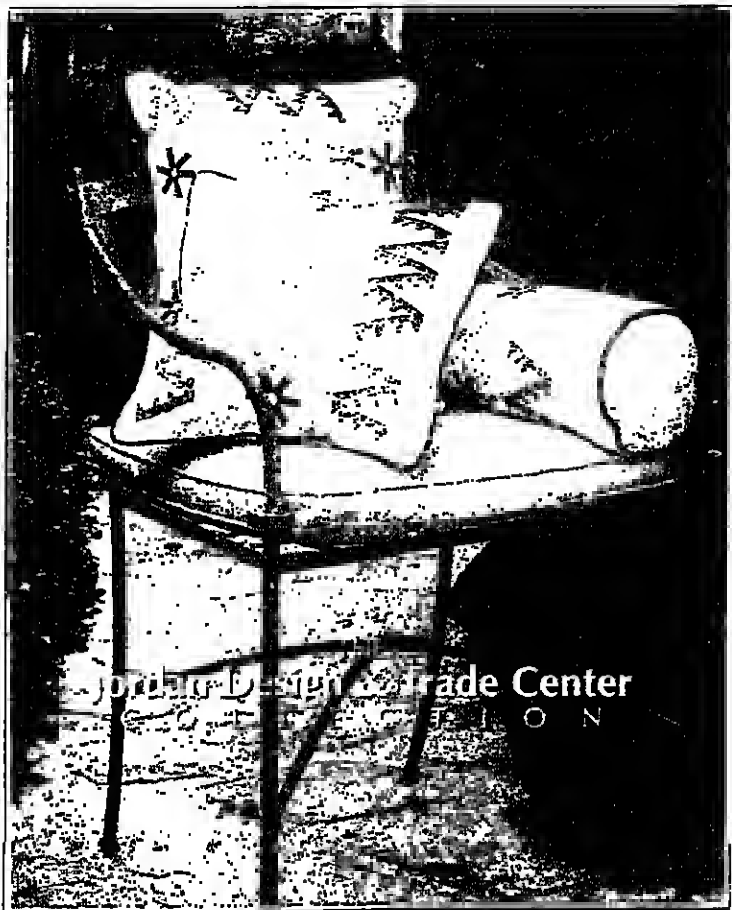
## Jordan Design and Trade Center Doing its bit for local community

AMMAN (Star)—The Jordan Design and Trade Center was established in 1990 and its aim is to create employment among low income communities, particularly for women, raise the standards of Jordanian handicrafts production, provide marketing opportunities internationally.

In 1995, the Center provided training and services to over 30 handicraft-related organizations. About 3,000 Jordanian crafts people and their families have benefited from the Center's assistance in product development, technical and management training and marketing.

The Center includes an export, wholesale and three retail outlets to market Jordanian handicrafts. It helps craft men and women sell their products locally and abroad by participating in major national and international exhibits and through other marketing means.

The Center operates with funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Fund for Women Development (UNIFEM). It also received assistance from a number of local organizations and embassies to Jordan. ■



## Enjoy the best in music at the Wings club



FOR AUDIENCES in search of the ultimate good time, few entertainers can match the sheer delight of David Holler. For the past three years, Holler has been a favourite of audiences throughout Europe and the UK. His influences include Elton John, the Beatles, Creedence, Sinatra, Elvis and many others. Watching an audience respond to him, there usually isn't a soul in the place who isn't clapping, singing, dancing or doing all three. David Holler entertains during March from Saturday to Thursday from 8:00 until midnight at the WINGS CLUB PIANO BAR located at the Radisson SAS Hotel Amman (former Philadelphia Hotel) ■

## Coca-Cola takes region-wide leadership in Middle East and North Africa

Bahrain—Fuelled by strategic investments and sales momentum in the Middle East, The Coca-Cola Company has taken market leadership in the Middle East

and North Africa region, an area long dominated by competition.

The latest investment got underway recently when construction began on a new \$20 million state-of-the-art bottling plant in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the fastest growing market for company products in the region.

The Middle East and North Africa region, spanning from Morocco in the west to Oman in the east, has benefited from \$400 million investment by the Coca-Cola system over the past five years, with a further \$200 million infusion scheduled for the next three years. This investment has been used to build and upgrade production facilities, extend distribution networks, place sales equipment and pursue aggressive marketing programs.

As a result, Coca-Cola products now represent 38 percent of total sales in the region as a whole. This is double the share of sales held five years ago. "We have always believed that the Middle East and North Africa region would be a leadership market for the Coca-Cola system," said Sandy Allan, president of the company's Middle East and North Africa Division. Douglas N. Datt, president Middle and Far East Group, The Coca-Cola Company, also added that "It is only a matter of time before we take the

lead in every one of the individual countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Investments of more than \$60 million have also been made in Jordan and Lebanon, where the company acquired the local Coca-Cola bottling operations in 1997, installing new equipment and advanced product quality systems, and providing training for employees throughout the organisation.

And in Egypt, the region's most populous country, the Coca-Cola Company has invested more than \$180 million to enhance production, distribution and marketplace execution, such as the placement of 30,000 coolers in 1997. As a result, after many years of being number two, the Coca-Cola system in Egypt has become the country's leading soft drink producer, with close to 60 percent shares of sales.

The Coca-Cola Company is the largest distributor of soft drinks in the world, with distribution networks in more than 200 countries world-wide. ■

**Coca-Cola**  
١٥ ١٥

365 Days a year...  
and just *One* day is dedicated  
to Mothers?!!

This year you are spoiled for choice...  
Hotel Inter-Continental Jordan gives you two  
options to make this occasion extra special!!!

A tasty Brunch for the family at Okaz Restaurant,  
our special menu includes a wide selection of your  
favourite, delicious dishes. To entertain the kids, Live  
Cartoon characters will be present to put a smile to their faces!

or  
Spice up the evening with a romantic Dinner at Bukhara  
Restaurant, where you can enjoy exquisite Indian cuisine  
and its splendid atmosphere.

On both occasions mothers will receive a free one-  
day pass for the new Inter-Fit Health Spa as  
well as 20% discount on beauty  
treatments!

Make Mom feel extra special on this day...

For more information call 4641361 ext. 2000

HOTEL  
INTER-CONTINENTAL  
JORDAN

The **Star**  
Jordan's political, economic  
and cultural weekly

Visit our URL  
<http://star.arabia.com>

Tel: 4652380 - 4645380

**SINCERELY YOURS**

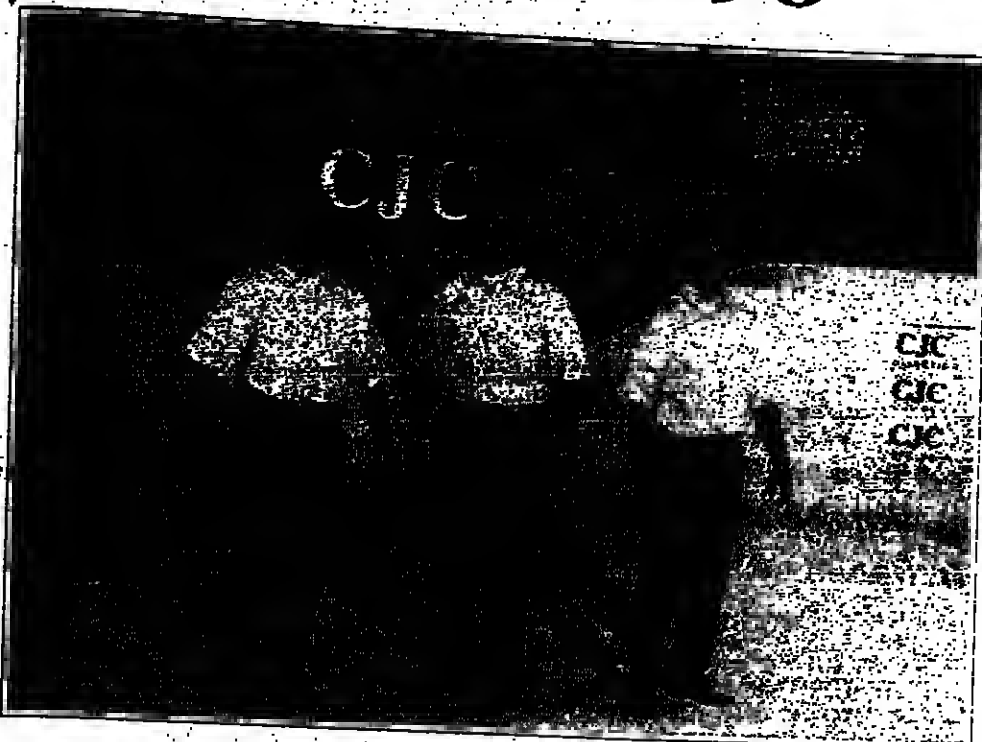
The Difference Is Uniquely Yours

P.O. Box 851746 Amman 11185, Jordan  
Abdoun Circle, Tel: 5934114 Fax: 5696509

Handwritten signature or note at the bottom of the page.



## Men's wear trends Summer '98



1988 SUMMER fashion is greatly influenced by styles from the late seventies. Trends include multi colours, simple designs and choice of comfortable fabrics as well as a lot of uni-colours and plains.

The cut of shirts is slightly slimmer but major changes are happening with collars. Versace reintroduced the

famous John Travolta big collar resting over the jacket and flashing the masculine chest. Others followed suit with a variety of collar models that are wider & bigger.

When top designers play with the cut they avoid influencing major changes in fabric styles. Simple two collar classic checks are still highly fashionable with blues remain-

ing prominent. Wide stripes on pastel-to-medium background are also in demand.

Fashion Colour plains with new shades resembling industrial minerals (steel, rust or copper), as well as dark greys and nut browns are back this season, while sweet, flashy colours are out for good. Muted, matching tones for trousers, shirts and jackets are a must this summer.

Major style shifts in trousers are in the area of comfortable cottons that bridge "extreme classic & jeans styles." The compliment: the plain look, nicely. Jacquards with small motifs, is the newest development, as well as knots of bright uni-colours knotted wider than usual.

T-shirts & polo shirts are still in growing demand as Jordanian men are more aware of the need of recreational Friday wear. Single jersey & pique made from 100% cotton are suitable for all occasions and men look smart wearing them, as long as they are in shape.

Nightwear wide stripes on dark background, in, and checks with white, are popular. Silk-screen printed boxers are popular among the young, and the prints could vary from cartoon characters to world maps.

Such freedom in design is also shared with socks that are now used as tools of expressing mood. Accessories such as belts, reflecting a degree of machismo, are wider in width & heavier on the buckle.

Overall the 1988 summer look reflects simplicity, masculinity & a touch of the past.

## Celebrating Mother's Day in Jordan Giving a little thought to the elderly

By Ibtisam Awadat  
Special to The Star

"WOMEN CONSTITUTE half of society," is the habitual phrase we hear when someone expresses an opinion about the fairer sex, but for others, women in the role of mothers have given birth to, nurtured and raised the entire world.

On 21 March, the world celebrates Mother's Day, although some people prefer to call it Family Day, believing that the mother is the essential link in any household which keeps the family together.

Before the big day, people shop for special gifts to give their mothers.

So, in advance, commercial centers devote special space to Mother's Day gifts: stylish clothes, chocolates, flowers, sometimes even kitchen utensils. In other words, anything that can be associated with mothers, the things they do and the way they make us feel.

"Whenever I think of Mother's Day I get jealous. My children buy their mother beautiful presents and give them to her. But I say why don't we have a Father's Day?" laughed Ibrahim Khawneeh, 34. "My own mother is a very dear person to me, even though she is very old and needs constant attention. I try to provide it, not only because it is my duty, but also because it is my pleasure," Ibrahim added.

"I don't want anything. I find all the happiness I want when all my children are gathered around me," said Umm Ahmad, 42, wandering with three of her children through a Shmeisani supermarket.

Many people refuse the idea of Mother's Day because they believe that people must look after their mothers every single day, without a need to be reminded of their duty.

But that's not always the case in Jordan. Many elderly men and women are being brought to old age homes seeking help and services they aren't receiving anywhere else.

The Amman House for the Aged, established four years ago, is a good example of such a place, and was established for an interesting reason.

"The owner of the house some years ago had an uncle who had never married. When he got old, he had no place to stay. You might say he was the first official resident of Amman House," said Maha Madhan, president of the residence.

In Amman House, elderly persons who have nowhere else to turn can receive good medical care. The House maintains contacts with two doctors and one social worker.

"I like to deal with the old-aged. Everyone of them has a story to tell. They don't ask for much, only to be talked and listened to. They hate to feel isolated from others," added Madhan.

In our tour inside the house, we noticed how clean and comfortable the house was. A group of older women were gathered to watch TV while workers were busy preparing lunch.

"I have four daughters and four sons; all are married but they live outside Jordan. That's why I stay here. When one of them comes back I will live with him," said Umm Ahmad, who doesn't remember her age. She is a widow of three years, and suffers from problems related to diabetes.

"I don't want anything. I pray to God to keep them in good health and help them to succeed in their lives," answered Umm Ahmad when asked about the present she wants most on Mother's Day.

Old age homes provide a place for elderly people who do not need to be hospitalized, yet are often too weak or confused to properly look after themselves on their own.

Another woman, her hair turned white, was talking to a colleague.

"I have been here for five months. My son was looking for a place where I could rest and receive good care because his wife can't take care of me, her family is already large enough. He was lucky to find this place, and I feel lucky too," said octogenarian Umm Omar.

"My sons always come to visit me and bring me anything I want. They never forget me. That's why I love them," Umm Omar added.

Some of the old men and women in the residence hold

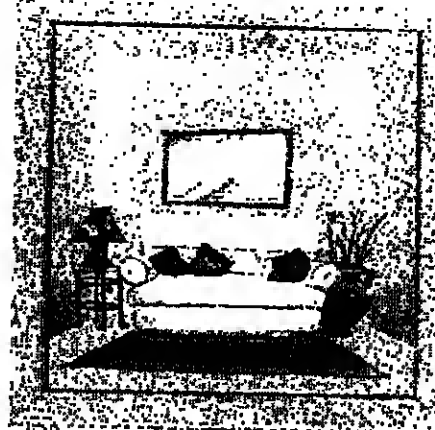
high degrees, but unfortunately suffer from old-age syndromes like dotage and forgetfulness.

"Keeping old people in places like this protects them from harm. We provide them with all the necessities, including tender loving care. That's why their children are so keen to have their parents stay here," Madhan commented.

And so we welcome Mother's Day, as it reminds us of those who brought us into this world, and of our responsibility to care for them.



Pity, in most cases the helping hand mothers give their young ones, is not returned when they grow old.



Jordan Design & Trade Center cordially invites you to

### ART ON ART

A Celebration of Iraq al Amir Products

PAINTINGS BY 15 ARTISTS

PLUS: CARDS / CUSHIONS / FABRICS / CLOTHING / CERAMICS AND MUCH MORE

(this exhibition runs from March 21st - April 25th)

JORDAN DESIGN & TRADE CENTER

Noor Al Hussein Foundation

Tel. 5699141/2 Opening hours 8:00 Am - 7:00 PM

(Off Wadi Saqra Street, between King Abdullah Gardens & Safeway, 2nd right after gas station)

**Today**

The medicinal power herbs are popular a

**THE CRUISE**

**TODAY**

**Your Tourism and Cultural Magazine In Jordan**

For information please call 4652380

JORDAN DUTY FREE

## Shopping without Borders

JDF

We're expanding the boundaries of shopping pleasure. We offer you an extensive collection of world famous brands, all tax-free.

### Amman Duty Free Shops

As a **Tourist** visiting Jordan, you are eligible to purchase from a vast selection of commodities each time you enter the kingdom within the first two weeks of your arrival, at a very sensational value.

As a **Diplomat** You are allowed to take piecemeal from your regular quota and enjoy a new monthly non-quota duty free goods without the exemption form plus a commercial discount on the original price tag with the best in service, quality, range of the widest choice of short & long term durable goods in the duty free business at highly competitive prices.

**Working hours: 8:00 am - 9:00 pm all weekdays except for Fridays.**

#### Jordanian-International Border Crossing Duty Free Shops

All land border travelers arriving or departing through any of the Crossing Points, are entitled to purchase duty free items at sensational prices. Our working hours are the same as those of the Crossing Point time schedule.

**For further information, please contact your travel agent, hotel reception, or call us at:**

**5683266 / 824187 Amman or 02/237554 Jordan Valley's DFS or 05/571548 King Hussein Bridge DFS.**

- Amman DFS / City Terminal Building near the 7th Circle.
- King Hussein Bridge DFS.
- Jordan's Valley Crossing Point DFS.
- Amman Center DFS / DQ / 4th Circle (opening soon).
- Jaber DFS / border with Syria (opening soon).
- Ramtha DFS / border with Syria (opening soon).
- Wadi Araba DFS / (opening soon).
- Al Karamah DFS / border with Iraq (opening soon).
- Aqaba Port DFS (opening soon).
- Aqaba Ship Chandlers DFS (opening soon).

**JDF Shops Company LTD. Administration- Isam Ajlouni Str. - Shmeisani**  
Tel 5683266 - Fax 5603571 - P.O. Box 941601 - Amman 11' Jordan  
E-Mail: jdf@go.com.jo

05.1.17.98

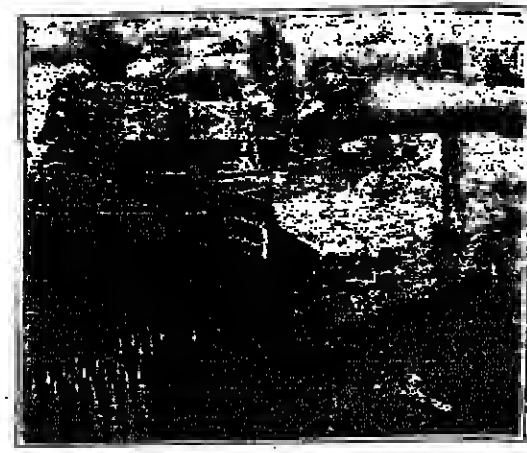


# Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

## Liban-sud, front militaire arabo-israélien depuis 20 ans

En représailles à des attaques palestiniennes, Israël envahit le sud du Liban le 14 mars 1978. L'opération Litani est destinée à protéger le nord de son territoire des combattants de l'Organisation de libération de la Palestine (OLP). Sommé par le Conseil de Sécurité (résolution 425) de se retirer « sans délai », Israël conservera une bande frontalière censée servir de bouclier face aux attaques palestiniennes. En 1982, l'État hébreu envahit à nouveau le Liban, en poussant l'offensive jusqu'à Beyrouth, et expulse l'OLP et son chef Yasser Arafat. En 1985 l'armée israélienne se retire en conservant toutefois une zone de sécurité de 850 km<sup>2</sup> au sud. Après avoir combattu au Liban pour empêcher les Palestiniens d'attaquer son propre territoire, l'État hébreu devient un occupant que l'on tente de chasser. Les intégristes du Hezbollah prennent le relais des Palestiniens et tirent sur le nord d'Israël en réponse aux bombardements de civils libanais. C'est le début d'un conflit larvé avec des épisodes dramatiques : en 1996, c'est l'opération « raisins de la colère » menée par l'aviation israélienne qui fait plus de 170 morts, essentiellement des civils. Répétant qu'ils n'ont ni contentieux avec Beyrouth ni prétention territoriale, les autorités israéliennes ont récemment proposé de se retirer sans traité de paix ni normalisation à condition que le gouvernement libanais garantisse la sécurité à la frontière. Il est vrai qu'au bout de vingt ans et plusieurs événements peu glorieux (massacre de Sabra et Chatila en 1982, bombardement meurtrier d'une position de l'ONU à Cana en 1996), Israël est confronté à un double problème : des pertes croissantes au Liban et un mouvement de fond dans l'opinion israélienne pour se dégager de l'ornière libanaise.



### Politique

## Majali, le parfait mauvais rôle

Sous la direction d'un Premier ministre distant et sans imagination, le gouvernement a poursuivi les efforts de normalisation avec Israël et surtout fait preuve de fermeté. Bilan d'un an d'impopularité.



Majali, déjà Premier ministre de 93 à 95, était chargé des négociations de paix avec Israël.

### Deux crises

Chambre des députés et décrète une loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications. Double objectif : empêcher la vente des actions du gouvernement dans les deux grands quotidiens (*Rai et Doustour*) et surtout, à l'approche de la campagne électorale, se débarrasser des hebdomadaires « qui ouvrent trop la bouche ». Treize d'entre eux seront suspendus en septembre avant d'être réhabilités par la Haute Cour de Justice... trois mois après les élections.

Pendant la campagne, la fermeté du gouvernement est évidente : avortement du dialogue avec les islamistes qui ont décidé de boycotter les élections, interdiction des réunions de certains candidats et de banderoles trop anti-israéliennes. Par ailleurs, des défections administratives graves sont signalées : un haut responsable reconnu que 120.000 cartes électorales ont été truquées.

Dans ce gouvernement, le ministre de l'intérieur a eu beaucoup de travail et n'hésite pas à faire intervenir les forces de l'ordre : contre les grèves des pharmaciens, des médecins et des étudiants, contre les agriculteurs de la Vallée du Jour-

dain et plus récemment contre les manifestations pro-irakiennes.

Les organisations internationales des droits de l'homme s'activent elles aussi et sortent en un an cinq rapports sur la situation en Jordanie dont trois « numéros » spéciaux.

Sur le plan économique, les citoyens retiennent l'augmentation des prix de l'eau, de l'électricité et des carburants au cours des quatre derniers mois. Le taux de chômage atteint lui 27,5% selon les révélations du Centre d'études stratégiques de l'Université de Jordanie. Le gouvernement Majali accélère le mouvement des privatisations et facilite les conditions des investissements étrangers. Le Fonds monétaire international n'en demandait pas tant et proposait même de reporter à plus tard la privatisation.

Quant à l'accord de partenariat avec l'Union Européenne, il inquiète plus qu'il ne réjouit les commerçants et les industriels jordaniens.

Enfin, tout au long de cette première année, l'équipe menée par Majali a poursuivi avec un dynamisme étonnant les projets de coopération avec Israël (projet d'aéroport commun Eilat-Aqaba, création d'une zone industrielle commune à Irbid). En revanche, dans l'opinion publique, l'affaire Mechtal ajoutée aux obstacles dressés par Netanyahu a réduit au minimum le nombre des affiliations de la normalisation avec l'État hébreu et du processus de paix et du coup, élargi le fossé d'incompréhension avec le gouvernement. Le 4 novembre dernier, l'écrivain Moussa Chouqir résumait ainsi l'action du pouvoir en place : « La Jordanie officielle va dans un sens tandis que la Jordanie populaire va dans un autre ». Deux semaines plus tard, elle n'était plus autorisée à écrire dans le *Rai*.

Suleiman Sweiss

### Archéologie

## Un centre pour conserver Pétra

Pour résister à l'usure du temps, Pétra a besoin d'un entretien permanent, à la mesure de celui prodigué par les Nabatéens. Aujourd'hui, la mise en œuvre du projet jordano-allemand d'un centre moderne de conservation et de restauration de la pierre apparaît donc comme une urgence.

### « Les Nabatéens savaient à quel point leurs monuments étaient exposés aux dangers de l'érosion, preuve en sont les nombreux escaliers creusés sur les façades de la seule fin de leur itinéraire touristique », affirme le Dr. Helge H. Fischer, le directeur du projet consistant à fonder un Centre de Conservation et de Restauration à Pétra (CCRP). Après le dépeuplement de la cité rose, ses canaux qui déviaient la pluie des façades ne furent plus d'entretien et la peinture qui les couvrait probablement ne fut plus refaite. Si 1500 ans ont suffi à la disparition de plus de 90% des façades de Pétra, combien de temps restera-t-il aux 10% survivants qui attirent encore des milliers de touristes chaque année en Jordanie ?

Oubliés jusqu'à sa « redécouverte » en 1812, encore négligés par la suite, Pétra a tout de même survécu. Un miracle. Mais « les quelques érudits bien intentionnés de conserver le Khazneh, le tombeau du Palais ou Qasr el-Bint, n'ont fait qu'aggraver leur état, à cause de l'abus d'un mortier incompatible avec la pierre à restaurer », explique Helge Fischer. Il ne faisait qu'élargir les fissures qu'il était censé boucher.

Aujourd'hui, les risques d'erreur sont réduits. Toute restauration moderne s'effectue sur la base d'une sérieuse investigation lithologique. « Les priorités implicites sont évidentes et incontournables », admet le spécialiste allemand, « mais il n'y a pas d'alternative : utiliser des matériaux non marbrés, serait plus dommageable que de ne rien faire du tout ». Fruits de ces principes fondamentaux, la Jordanie et le gouvernement allemand ont démarré en 1994 un projet de coopération technique à l'initiative de l'Institut d'Archéologie et d'Anthropologie de l'Université de Yarmouk. Objectif : fonder un centre jordanien indépendant capable de planifier, superviser et exécuter sans interruption un travail de conservation

et de restauration des façades de Pétra.

« C'est un projet unique dans le monde arabe qui doit être achevé vers 2001 », précise le Dr. Fischer. « On a bien avancé, assure-t-il, en effet, les priorités du grès de Pétra ont été établies, une grande variété de matériaux testés, un mortier compatible identifié (dans sa composition et sa couleur, NDLR), l'équipement nécessaire continue d'être transporté sur le site selon le programme, du personnel qualifié a été formé en Allemagne et des bédouins sont employés sur place pour la restauration d'un monument qui n'a commencé en 1997 ».

### Patrimoine mondial

Au total, 5 millions de Deutsche Marks (environ 1,7 millions JD) ont été mis en jeu. Deux pas essentiels restent cependant à franchir : l'attribution d'un statut semi-gouvernemental au centre et la construction de locaux. Il s'agit d'assurer à la fois la fidélité, la motivation (bons salaires) et l'unité de l'équipe de travail. Pour le directeur du projet, « la formule d'une institution semi-gouvernementale sous l'égide du Haut Conseil pour la Science et la Technologie et le patronage du Prince Hassan, est la plus appropriée ». Concernant la construction d'une « maison » pour le Centre, le terrain existe (alloué par le Département des Antiquités près du Forum Hôtel de Pétra), le permis a été délivré à la fin de l'année dernière. Pourtant, rien ne peut commencer sans qu'une partie substantielle du budget ne soit débouquée.

« Même si un projet d'assistance technique limite habilement la construction d'équipement et la formation de spécialistes, le Ministère



Des bédouins sont formés sur place pour aider à la restauration des façades et embauchés à la journée.

allemand pour la coopération et le développement économique est prêt à contribuer à la construction des locaux », affirme le Dr. Fischer. Il s'agit d'un maximum de 100.000 JD, qui seront versés au moment où le partenariat jordanien débouquera la même somme.

Par ailleurs, le Dr. Fischer est en train d'œuvrer à la création d'une fondation - allemande qui offrira de l'aide supplémentaire à cette institution jordanienne qu'il veut tellement voir naître. Une fois créé, le Centre jordanien de

Conservation et de Restauration de Pétra sera une première absolue en Jordanie et dans le monde arabe. Ainsi, plutôt que d'être, obligés de recourir chaque fois à une expertise étrangère, les Jordaniens pourront eux-mêmes prendre soin de ce qui représente non seulement leur héritage culturel, reconnu patrimoine mondial par l'Unesco mais bien sûr une des sources principales de revenus du pays.

Anca de Maio

## Nouvelles du Pays

### Informatique

## Internet : l'esprit des journaux... en ligne

Les sites Internet des organes de la presse écrite française prolongent l'esprit de ces journaux et y associent les potentialités d'Internet. Zoom sur quelques sites de la presse écrite.

Sur le réseau mondial, l'information circule vite. Aussi sous diverses latitudes, les internautes pressés n'hésitent-ils pas à consulter les sites Internet de leurs journaux favoris. Une réponse à une demande éternelle d'information que Michel Chabon d'Iria, rédacteur en chef du *Monde* en ligne, qualifie avec un sens de la métaphore de « médium pour les drogues de l'information ». Ce « substitut du journal papier » présente son contenu en ligne en deux versions : l'une en mode texte, l'autre plus longue et consultable à partir d'un télé-

chargement page à page du quotidien. Mais les sites de la presse écrite recèlent bien d'autres potentialités. Comme celle de mettre en perspective l'actualité sous forme de dossiers étoffés et constamment remis à jour. Durant le festival de Cannes, Le Monde en ligne a réactualisé son contenu 6 à 8 fois par jour, chose impossible pour l'édition papier.

Collant à l'actualité, les thèmes des dossiers épousent de près les lignes éditoriales des journaux et présentent, parallèlement à des articles pub-

liés dans leurs journaux, différents éclairages sur les sujets traités. Ainsi en naviguant, on découvre, par exemple, un dossier sur les composantes d'un conflit : « Le jour en la Palestine fut parti » (*Libération*) ou sur les différentes phases d'un procès, comme celui actuellement de Maurice Papon (*Le Monde*).

Sur le thème « ce droit du sol à gouverner variable », le site du *Monde* se fait l'écho de la réforme en cours. Il publie en ligne l'intégralité du rapport remis au gouvernement sur le sujet de l'immigration. Décidant d'apporter un éclairage vécu, *Le Monde* en ligne a reproduit trois textes récents extraits d'un livre publié chez Denoel intitulé, *Mon Eldorado, la France*, fondés sur des témoignages d'étrangers. Quant des ressorts d'Internet, ce dossier tente une expérience interactive. Deux experts Patrick Weil, l'auteur du rapport cité, et Danièle Lochack, responsable d'association, sont invités à intervenir en fonction de la portée des débats sur Internet, dans l'opinion et à l'Assemblée nationale. Une initiative appelée à se renouveler. Se définissant comme de simples « médiateurs », la rédaction du *Monde* en ligne n'intervient pas dans le débat. Seuls des propos contraires aux valeurs citoyennes ne sont pas permis.

Toujours dans cette veine interactive mais sur un autre registre, le magazine féminin *Elle* propose « des rencontres virtuelles avec des personnalités de tous horizons » ou encore un dossier sur « la pègre à 30 ans ».

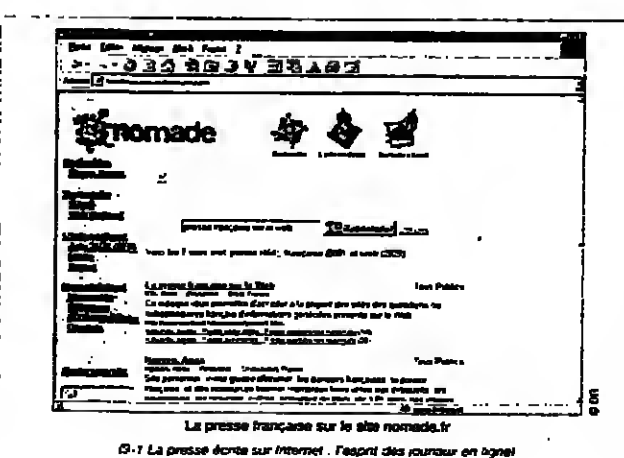
Outre les forums, le multimé-

dia, c'est aussi cette capacité d'opérer des liens hypertextes. A l'occasion de l'ouverture de nouvelles salles égyptiennes du Louvre, *Le Monde* en ligne propose aux internautes des mots-clés comme autant de sésumes sur l'Égypte ancienne.

La presse régionale n'est pas en reste. Ses sites sont nombreux et parfois plus anciens que ceux de la presse nationale.

Inès Sonarriba

Deux sites Internet de la presse écrite nationale :  
Le Monde : <http://www.lemonde.fr>  
Libération : <http://www.libération.fr>



La presse française sur le site nomade.fr

## Balbutiements en Jordanie

Constat évident : la presse en ligne est peu développée ici. Un coup d'œil sur les différents sites en service suffit. Celui du *Doustour* propose des informations périodiques d'une semaine et celui du *Rai* n'est pas toujours accessible. En général, les journaux se contentent de reproduire sur Internet leur version papier. Pas de dossiers, pas de forums de discussions. Seuls le *Star* et le *Jordan Times* tentent quelques efforts : votre hebdomadaire préféré vous met à disposition toutes ses archives depuis son lancement sur le net en novembre 95, le quotidien en anglais, lui, a choisi de soigner sa première page d'accès avec une photo d'actualité accrocheuse. A part ces quelques initiatives, c'est le désert Wadi cybernautique.

Pour Khattab Salman, chef d'édition d'Arabia on line, le service média numéro un sur Internet dans le Moyen-Orient, cette absence de presse en ligne jordanienne dénote de ce pays s'expliquant d'abord par des raisons techniques. Les journaux n'ont pas encore adopté le moyen de rentrer sur leur serveur des infor-

mations écrites en arabe. Du coup, ils sont obligés de scanner leurs pages (c'est-à-dire de les transformer en images) pour les rendre lisibles : « c'est lourd à gérer et pas très flexible », juge Khattab Salman.

Mais le retard jordanien vient par dessus tout du manque d'intérêt des journaux pour Internet. « Pour l'instant, tous les sites proposés sont d'accès gratuit, analyse le chef d'édition d'Arabia on line, et les journaux ne voient pas Internet comme une source d'argent ». Se mettre en ligne reste une façon d'occuper le terrain face à la concurrence et de toucher un public hors des frontières.

Khattab Salman donne l'exemple de l'hebdo pro-islamique *Sabeel* qui s'est lancé sur le net en espérant « être lu par les musulmans des États-Unis ». Quant au *Star*, son site comptabilise plus de 70.000 connexions par mois, la plupart en dehors de la Jordanie.

Le Jourdain

### Phénomène social

## Un wasta sinon rien

Avec les beaux jours du chômage, le piston ou « wasta » est plus que jamais florissant. Un sésame qui semble indispensable pour entrer sur le marché du travail.

« Le feu vert ». « la vitamine W », « le passeport universel », ou encore « la panacée ». Toutes ces expressions tombées dans le langage courant désignent la même chose : le « wasta », un sport que les Français pratiquent aussi allégrement sous le nom de piston.

Les Jordaniens, dans leur majorité, y croient : « Avec un wasta, vous avez un atout ; vous pouvez alors sans aucun doute la vie vous sourir ». Combien en profitent ? Les chiffres manquent pas les exemples. Le cas de Manal, jeune diplômée en comptabilité, est assez révélateur. La veinarde a réussi à décrocher un travail deux semaines seulement après avoir terminé ses études à l'université. Le wasta a bien marché. Manal ne s'en cache d'ailleurs pas : « Mon père a téléphoné au directeur d'une banque. Ils ont un lien de parenté. Dès le lendemain, j'avais mon bureau sans avoir présenté de dossier et sans passer de test ». Rien qu'un coup de fil en toute décontraction. Pendant ce temps, d'autres soupirent de désespoir en voyant leurs diplômes prendre la poussière : « Cela fait deux ans que je retourne à la terre pour obtenir un boulot mais en vain », raconte Ahmad en colère. « Je n'ai pas de wasta, mon dossier de candidature ne retient pas l'attention ».

Du coup cela déroute mes amis de réussite. Je n'ai plus d'ambition ni de rêves. Puis il ajoute impuissant : « A notre époque, la débrouillardise est la seule chose qui compte. Il faut savoir utiliser toutes les chances sinon tu restes dans l'ombre ».

Comme lui, beaucoup de jeunes finissent par se résigner et à considérer le wasta comme un obstacle fatal, le privilège de réseaux inaccessibles. « Que je trouve du travail ou non, cela m'est égal », se dit aujourd'hui Ola après quatre ans de chômage.

De plus, les employeurs ont aussi leur part de responsabilité. Abed Al-Karzem, directeur d'une société, se vante d'être un grand défenseur du wasta : « Je crois au piston car c'est une preuve que les gens s'entraident. Quand mon ami ou mon parent me demande de l'aider, ce ne serait gentil de ma part de refuser ». Réflexe naïf au nom de tous les liens. Bref le wasta est une mélodie facile qui résonne partout, dans les entreprises, les écoles et même la rue. Aux heures de pointe, quant les files s'allongent sur les trottoirs en attendant le bus, il y en a toujours qui montent avant les autres parce qu'ils connaissent le chauffeur !

Nahed Al-Khlouf

Le Jourdain  
Supplément  
du Star  
4-645 380

Star@net.com.jo

## C'est la vie

L'agenda culturel d'Amman

### Cinéma

Cycle consacré à l'acteur français Alain Delon. *Le passage*, un film de René Manzor (1986), sous-titré en arabe. Un spécialiste de dessin animé est victime d'un accident de voiture avec son fils. La mort lui propose un marché... Lundi 23 mars à 18h30 et 20h30 au Centre culturel français. Réservations au 637000 ou 636445. Entrée libre.

### Journées de la Francophonie

Fresque - Paul de Gobert exposera ses œuvres préparatoires à son projet de fresque murale (dessins, pastels et toiles de paysages français et jordaniens). Le vernissage sera suivi d'une conférence de l'artiste sur le thème et les aspects techniques de cette œuvre, ainsi que ses autres réalisations. Vernissage le vendredi 20 mars à 17h00 puis conférence à 18h00. Nouvelle municipalité, Ras-el-Ain.

Contes - Un concours d'illustration de contes francophones traduits en arabe pour les élèves de 7 à 12 ans des écoles jordaniennes. Vernissage le vendredi 20 mars suivi de la remise des prix à 10h00. Nouvelle municipalité, Ras-el-Ain.

مكتبة



## Heliopolis Hotel Turn-of-century elegance at Egyptian 'palace of the sun'

By Samir Raafat  
Star Cairo Correspondent

THANKS TO transparency, electronic media, zipper scandals and UN resolutions, many of the world's presidential haunts are accessible to television viewers around the globe. But unlike the Elysee, the White House, and soon, Saddam's shangrils, Egypt's presidential palaces remain a conundrum to the people of this country.

Believe it or not, 48 years after Nasser's Free Officers vowed to turn this into a 'by the people' for the people republic, its citizenry is as removed from the temples of power as they were three millenniums ago when Pharaoh ruled the land. Except for one or two halls in either Abdin, Tahrir, Koubeh or Ras Al Tin (where the commander in chief receives his peers and foreign counterparts), Mohammed Doe has never seen the gilded interiors of these ex-royal palaces. And unless plans to turn them into visitable historic sites ever resurface, there is no chance he ever will.

Not so the Ithadiya Palace in Heliopolis! Look around and you may still find those who remember having frequented it as the Heliopolis Palace Hotel. International conferences, weddings and honeymoons took place there as did the coveted 'apres courses' celebrations. The races at the nearby Heliopolis Sporting Club were second to none this side of the Mediterranean. And although no veterans are around to remind us they were there, as well, during the World War I, the hotel was requisitioned by the British as a military hospital.

The Heliopolis Palace Hotel was built in 1908-10, in the days when lengthy sojourns in Egypt was a social ritual. The

hotel's pre-WWI register resembled a leaf out of Burke's Peerage. The hotel's first proprietor was Monsieur Marquet. Its inaugural director was Herr Doerhoefer and its first food and beverage manager was Monsieur Bedard assisted by chef Govin. Both had come from the Paillard Restaurant in Paris. On December 1, 1910, all four greeted Egypt's best as they celebrated the inauguration of Africa's most luxurious hotel.

Conceived by Belgian architect Ernest Jaspar, the hotel boasted 400-rooms including 55 private apartments, its banquet halls were amongst the biggest anywhere. As though intentional, its severe almost forbidding exterior contrasted sharply with the sumptuousness of the interior.

A 1912 visitor had this to say about the hotel: "Beyond the reception offices are two lavishly decorated rooms, in the Louis XIV and Louis XV styles respectively and then comes the central hall, which is a dream of beauty and symmetry. Here the architecture, which is responsible for so many wonderful effects in Heliopolis, reaches its artistic zenith. From every nook and cranny hang, suspended like stalactite pendants, Damascus-made oriental lamps of fantastic loveliness. Above soars the dome rising in a bold scheme with all the involved convolutions of oriental ornamentation. No photograph or description could do justice to the wondrous and elusive loveliness of the scene, which is as baffling to the language as it is to the lens."

The hotel's main hall's dome measures 55 meters from the floor to the ceiling. The 589 square meter hall was carpeted with the finest Oriental rugs and with large floor-to-ceiling mirrors, draperies and a large marble fireplace. Twenty-two

Italian marble columns connected the parquet to the ceiling. To one side of the hall there was the grill room which seated 150 guests and to the other side was the north room or billiard hall with two full-sized Thurston tables as well as a priceless French one. The mahogany furniture was specially ordered at Maple's of London. The upper gallery contained oak reading and card rooms furnished by Krieger of Paris.

The basement kitchen and staff area was so large that a narrow gauge railway was installed running the length of the hotel passing by offices, kitchens, pantries, refrigerators, store rooms and the staff mess. In the aftermath of WW II, air travel more than halved the average tourist stay. Mass production and consumption introduced the era of the camera-clicking crowds. As tourism became a mega-industry, vertical Nile side hotels started to crop up where everything was being calculated on the basis of a 'return to the square meter'.

Unable to compete, the Heliopolis Palace Hotel became a dinosaur. As was the case with many lesser known palaces and private mansions in the 1960s, the abandoned hotel became the headquarters of successive government departments. One by one its inimitable artifacts were chipped away by an untutored public. The next guests looked to be a bulldozer and a demolition ball.

In the 1980s, whether by divine or temporal intervention, the Heliopolis Palace Hotel was granted a new lease on life: The former hotel was given a thorough facelift, and declared the headquarters of the new administration. Once again, the Taj Mahal of the desert would become the focus of national and international attention. ■

By Brenda Polan

THIS WAS watershed week in Paris. A new generation strong-thened its grip on the creative capital of the world's fashion industry. The level of anticipation was high as a long list of staid couture houses and luxury goods empires attempted to do a deal.

John Galiano, of course, is spoken for. In a single season, the designer put the gently decaying House of Dior back in the vanguard of fashion: he now produces two collections for Dior as well as his own ready-to-wear line. But the world is full of young designers.

So Givenchy, where Galiano spent two seasons before moving to Dior, employed fellow Briton and fellow Si Martin's graduate Alexander McQueen. He may have scared away some of the old clients, but his aggressive, raunchy style has brought in new ones and garnered hags of lovely publicity.

After some experimentation and a little misjudgment, McQueen has the measure of Givenchy. He toned down the gimmicky and employed his signature sharp tailoring to produce a strong, controlled collection which Hubert de Givenchy might have called his own. It included the most beautiful beaded evening gown in Paris.

Hot on McQueen's heels came Stella McCartney, daughter of the ex-Beatle, Sir Paul, and only 25, to rescue the ready-to-wear Chloe from stagnation. Her debut last October knocked decades off the average age of the customer and was reckoned a critical success.

On Wednesday, in Paris, her second collection went

further along the Rock-Chick road with its tight, tight shiny satins, its suggestive studs and zippers and its drop-waisted flares over killer stilettos. A hit for some tastes, but the crowd loved it.

Everybody has taken note of Tom Ford's resuscitation of the almost dead brand, Gucci. They have brooded on the revival of Dior at the hands of Galiano and on Givenchy's new edgy image and young clientele, both courtesy of McQueen, who did a sexy Bladernier-meets-Bohemia collection. And, courage bolstered by McCartney's success at Chloé, they have fallen in behind.

The new collection for Louis Vuitton, and the camera-shy Belgian, Martin Margiela, did the same for Hermès. Both showed easy, modern, luxurious clothes for grown-up women and Margiela for once showed them on beefy women models of 30 and over, many brought out all retirement for the occasion.

Both collections were cool, minimalist and neutral in the way that Miuccia Prada's early collections were. But all of these designers are, none is Galiano's equal. He is just emerging as the

greatest designer of the end of the 20th century. And each collection merely confirms his position as the man with the imagination to move fash-

Against a conjured-up New York nightscape, he created the Marcel waves and the slender, coquettish silhouettes so evocative of the early years of the century. He did it in modern, active-life materials and with humorously sporty details.

Today, the fashion crowd is eager to see Michael Kors' first collection for Celine - the last of the LVMH brands to be given a magic revamp - and Andrew Gn's for Balmain. Kors is a very talented classical American sportswear designer, specialising in chic, simple shapes in the most expensive materials. Andrew Gn, a 33-year-old Singaporean who is also a graduate of St Martin's, has similar strengths: a purity of line, an aversion to fuss and nonsense, an instinct for luxury.

With all the intensely interesting debuts going on, the reliable old guard might be forgiven for feeling a little neglected. But all of them, notably the experimentally-minded Japanese and Belgians, have

delivered strong collections. Dries van Noten's gypsy campfire collection was particularly covetable, as were the ad hoc deconstructed-reconstructed clothes of Rei Kawakubo at Comme des Garçons.

Kawakubo described her unorthodox juxtapositions of fragments of clothes as "fusion" and the effect was rather as if gremlins had sneaked into a deserted atelier full of well-cut, half-assembled couture clothes and latched them together every which way but correctly. So an impeccable box-pleated skirt would turn round to reveal itself as half a skirt supplanted at the back by wrinkled leggings.

A wonderful curvy frock-coat would swirl and turn inside out, its lining, interface and perfect seams on full display. It was completely enchanting, even if the remorselessly slow show rather laboured the point.

Kawakubo's compatriot, Issey Miyake, was in an exuberant mood, opening his collection in shades of flame red, easing to fondant tones of pink and lavender, then silver, gold and bronze.

Effects were quite magical, with garments shaped by wrapping and ruching, by folded, overlapping panels, by extravagant quilting into dramatic hieratic shapes which cocooned the body and lent it an unaccustomed grandeur.

The hottest news out of Paris, however, was as banal as ever. Whatever the shape, the fabric they're in or the tops that goes with them, skirts are long again. It's official. ■

Financial Times Syndication

Simon says short skirts out

## Latest from Paris: long slinky fabrics



# BUSINESSMAN'S GUIDE

**LET YOUR NAME SOAR ABOVE AMMAN**

To book your Advertisement Graphic and Business on the Electronic Sign Boards on the SAFWAY Bldg. ESHNANA Center, Jabal Alhussein & DOWNTOWN call 580367

**C TOWN**

We save you more

The most pleasurable shopping experience... It's just about everything you need, at low prices. Amman-7th Circle Tel: 514129

**Comfort Hotel Suites**

Luxury  
Comfort  
Service  
Location

In the heart of Sweifyeh

Tel 856189

**Q ORLANE Beauty Institute**

Paraffin  
Body skin treatment  
Makeup  
European manicures & pedicures

Qweider Trading Est  
Tel: 695049

**The First Class Hotel in Amman that has a Kitchenette in every room**

**DAROTEL**

Amman Tel: 607193  
P.O.Box 9403 Fax 602434  
Telex 23888 Darot Jo  
Ideal Residence for Expatriates and Businessmen

**Enjoy Reading The Star Every Thursday Morning**

**For Only JD 20**

**Annual Subscription**

For more information please call 652380 fax 648298

**Abdoun Real Estate**

5920605 / 5920607  
Fax: 5932605  
Mobile: 07930007

**Three Star**

Tel. 4652380 - 4645380

**The first & best Chinese Restaurant in Jordan**

1st Circle, Jabal Amman, near Ahliyyah Girls School  
Take away is available  
Open daily 12:00-3:30p.m  
7:00-Midnight  
Tel 638968

**tune-in and select your quest tonight**

Mr. Bean - Elton John - Sharon Stone - FA Cup Final - ساد الدنيا ادب

RSV - BC - Time - The 100 - Jacke

Jerry Springer - Aladdin - Final Analysis - Monte Carlo - جاك اليب

Open - Demi Moore - Mediterranean - CBS 60 Minutes - Late Show with David Letterman

Peicay Brief - S. Feid - R. G. and - Roy

Ascot - NBC Nightly News - George Michael - Proctor

Astar - Rush - M. - Friends

Brad Pitt - The Fugitive - Sylvester and Tweety - جاك القربان

guess what's next? - R. - - - -

**Orbit**

A world of entertainment!

For more information call Orbit Direct at +357 909 5000



## THE STAR'S STATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH NOTES

Edited by Zeid Nasser

### 'Capital punishment' in search engines

WHAT A dreadful title for an article, you're probably thinking. Well, perhaps. The thing is, observing a number of Internet training sessions should shed light on how people enter their search terms into search engines.

Some enter all words in lower case (small letters), some all in upper case (capital letters), and some in a MIX of Both.

One would imagine, and hope, that this would have little bearing on the results presented by the search engines.

However, in reality, the case you use makes such a profound difference to the effectiveness of your search.

A good example which highlights the problems is the seemingly innocent word "next".

This word has a variety of meanings depending on the case used. Among other things, it can mean "being or positioned or living nearest" (Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary).

The international clothing retailer "NEXT" (<http://www.next.co.uk/>), or the software company "NeXT" (<http://www.next.com/>) which has been purchased by Apple.

Therefore, we shall use this example to examine how different search engines make allowance for each case. Please read on and find out what you should watch out for



in the search engines you use.

AltaVista is a great first example on how the results can change due to case sensitivity. In both cases its Simple and Advanced search modes,

searching for "next" doesn't retrieve any results because the word is considered to be too common. However, "NeXT" retrieves 13000 results. "NEXT" gets 3000.

and "Next" gets a whopping 100 million pages!

With InfoSeek, if you capitalize adjacent words then it takes these as a single name or title. This can cause a number of problems if you are unaware that the program does so, and the engine retrieved totally different results for the four example case variations.

HotBot ignores capitalization if search terms are in lower case, but does take note of words with "interesting" case such as "NeXT" which gets 80,000 results. All other variations get the same 12 million documents. A number of search engines are case insensitive, but some still have traps to watch out for.

Lycos and WebCrawler are both case insensitive.

Yahoo is the same, but you must remember that, if it doesn't find any pages in its index which match your search, then it displays AltaVista pages. The latter is case sensitive and so you have to be careful.

Some search engines, like Northern Light for example, are case insensitive when searching, but display the results in a different order depending on the case used in

### Probably the best, most imaginative Jordanian Internet site: Galleria serves movie fans, on-line

GALLERIA CINEMA, the newly opened cinema theater in Abdoun, is making its presence felt in more than one field. Apart from being a top venue for entertainment, it is also the first Jordanian cinema theater to utilize the Internet; and what a successful Internet site it has managed to accomplish!

Developed by Computer Networking Services (CNS), the web consulting company and the operator of the Primus bulletin board service (BBS), the Galleria site has turned out to be a very attractive and unique effort.

Visitors to the Galleria site on the WorldWideWeb or on Primus BBS can enjoy a well-designed, graphic intensive site that includes suitable melodies and music tailored to the films on show at the Cinema.

The opening page is easy to use, as it offers options to check out the latest movies at Galleria, or general information about the Galleria (including



ing a neat map displaying the route to the Cinema), and their is information on attractions coming soon to the Cinema; in addition to much more.

Under the what's playing at Galleria category, visitors will find a comprehensive review, complete with pictures or scenes from the movie, and accompanying music from the film soundtrack! You can actually see some movie previews in digitized video!

What is particularly impressive is the graphical talent displayed in introducing the

interior layout and furnishings of the cinema theater. Obvious efforts have been made in providing professional photography of interiors.

Soon, Galleria Cinema will enable visitors to the site to reserve their seats on-line! This is quite revolutionary, as the user-interface implemented to do this is based on a simple layout of the chairs, upon which the user clicks selecting his/her preferred seating arrangements!

"So far, response to the Galleria site has been phenomenal," stated Mr Amer Naseriddin, marketing manager at CNS. "It's the first site of its kind, and it showcases the power of on-line media in serving cinema goers and entertainment clients in general."

To check out the Galleria site, go to [www.cns.go.com/jv/galleria](http://www.cns.go.com/jv/galleria) on the WorldWideWeb, or if you are a Primus subscriber, simply visit the commercial section of the BBS.

### CorelDRAW 8 arrives

CORELDRAW 8 is a comprehensive 32-bit graphics suite designed for Windows 95 and Windows NT. It includes innovative applications for page layout and illustration, photo editing and bitmap creation, and 3D modelling and rendering. Users can take advantage of the advanced speed and performance offered to create dazzling visual images in a flash.

The new release includes intuitive Web features that allow users to easily create graphic implementations on the Internet. Easy HTML publishing is standard.

The CorelDRAW 8 package comes complete with Corel-PhotoPaint 8 and Corel 3D 8, in addition to a number of utilities such as OCR-Trace 8, Capture 8, Script Editor, Bitstream Font Navigator and



many more. As expected, CorelDRAW 8 comes with massive libraries of clipart (40,000 images and symbols), 1000 photos, 1000 Type and True Type fonts, 250 3D models, animated GIF files, themed Web backgrounds and more.

### INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

#### A figment of our imagination: The paperless office

FOR THE past two decades, 'futurists' have been making all sorts of fictional predictions. One of those is the 'paperless office' theory which holds that the advancement of computers, electronic exchange, Internet and media, will render the use of paper unnecessary in business organizations.

Well, as attractive as that may sound, the harsh truth is that the use of paper in the information age is growing and is projected to continue to grow all the way up to the middle of the 21st century. Why? Well, for one thing, paper is cheap and readily available. Everyone knows how to use it and the law can tackle material written on paper in resolving differences between parties; whereas electronic material may not hold up in a court of law (unless printed out, that is!).

What's more, it is unrealistic to imagine that every business firm in the world has access to computers, Internet or any other form of information technology. The fact of the matter is that the 'paperless office' may become a reality in a single department, in a company like Microsoft, but it will never become a reality in any small business firm in certain parts of Asia or Africa. Not for a very long time, at least!

Take your typical business day as an example. You print out a letter, then go to your fax and send the paper. It is printed out at the receiving end on paper! Then, it is photocopied (more paper) and stored in a file.

If you were to conduct this procedure electronically, you would have to send the letter by email or electronic fax. The receiver would have to read it on screen, find no point in printing it out, and then the receiver should store the incoming message on a disk of some sort, which resembles an electronic file or folder.

Now, where's the problem? It all seems reasonable enough. Well, for one thing, 'it takes two to tango'. The sender and receiver must both have access to electronic communications via computers and must both depend on an electronic storage system! Even if you know 10, 20 or 30 companies who apply electronic systems so extensively, the rest of the companies or people you deal with are not like that! You have to send them papers, receive papers from them and store these papers physically!

So, paper-preachers can revel in their victory. As for electronic fanatics! Well, my heart goes out to them. It would be great, if we didn't see a piece of paper in an office again, but paper will be around for a very, very long time there. Probably long enough for your grandson to wonder why it still exists!

#### Arabia.On.Line wins 'Best Euro-Mediterranean' Internet site

ARABIA.ON.LINE, the comprehensive Internet information service covering Arab news, business and entertainment, received the 'Best Euro-Mediterranean Site Award' as part of the activities of the Euro-Mediterranean Internet Conference held in Cyprus between 4 and 7 March, 1998.

This award is a recognition of Arabia.On.Line's distinguished role as an Internet media. Mr Khalid Tabaza, Publisher at Arabia.On.Line said on receiving this award that "Europe and the Mediterranean are working hard to keep up with the fast pace of Internet developments."

"We at Arabia.On.Line are proud to be recognized as pioneers in the Internet industry on the Mediterranean-European level," he added. It is worth noting that Arabia.On.Line received the 'Best Media Site' award from the pan-Arab magazine *Internet Arab World*, as voted by thousands of Arabic readers from all over the Middle East.

Global One is the pioneering provider of full Internet services in Jordan

Sales Department tel: 569-7777 . Fax: 569-7111 E-mail: [info@go.com.jo](mailto:info@go.com.jo)

GlobalOne

Deutsche Telekom France Telecom Sprint

### Travel

## Ascent to Asni

Text and photos by Osama El-Sherif

IT'S A good one hour drive by car from Marrakech to the sloping hills perched at the foot of the snow-capped Atlas mountains. But the journey along the narrow rural road is worth taking—especially on Saturdays. For it is market day in Asni, a provincial town 50 kilometers south of Marrakech. Hundreds of Berbers descend on the town's central market to trade—just like they have for centuries.

As the dry plain behind us disappeared, our car began its gradual climb

towards the hills. The serpentine road carved into the shoulder of a gray ridge overlooking a deep precipice is a challenge to any driver. The road is mainly used by taxis and minibuses making their daily shuttle trips to and from Marrakech.

As our driver, himself a Berber, negotiated blind turns, he spoke of a way of life that has changed very little in thousands of years for the people who dwell in this mountain range. The Shluoh, as they are locally called, have lived here for centuries, preserving a unique and colorful way of life.

Looking at us, with a white peak 4000 meters above sea level, is Mt. Toubkal, one of the highest mountains in Africa. It stands shoulder to shoulder with other snow-capped mountains that extend from the desert all the way to the Mediterranean. This is a part of Morocco that I knew very little about. Our one-day journey to Asni was to prove both educational and entertaining.

Arriving in Asni by mid-day, the town was bustling with activity. Minibuses and taxis parked and moved in front of the market gate haphazardly. The scene was chaotic in a positive way. City traffic rules and regulations don't mean much here, for mechanical vehicles are passive intruders. To reach Asni and other towns and hamlets the mule remains the most common and efficient means of transport.

Passing through the arched gateway into Asni's market, one is immediately taken by the commotion of people, the redolence of food and the bright colors of people's attire. The Berbers are fond of a colorful wardrobe. No two people wear the same color robes and there are plenty of colors to choose from: earth brown, jade green, saffron yellow, crimson red, navy blue, you name it. And then there is the hubbub and tumult of strange tongues and foreign accents. Morocco is a land of many languages and accents. But in a peculiar way, one finds himself at home in Asni, riveted by the exotic surroundings and the good nature of the town's inhabitants and visitors.

In Asni's market there is everything and nothing. One can find hand-made silver-plated daggers, mirrors studded with semi-precious stones and other traditional handicrafts that are also available in Marrakech and elsewhere. Someone with time on his hands can dig in and inspect a motley collection of merchandise that also includes Chinese-made screwdrivers and spanners, Taiwanese transistor radios and American army boots. There are costumes of all colors and designs, herbs and spices, special ointments and oils, nuts, grain and seeds, canned foods, leather goods, vegetables, and on and on.

For me, the attraction in the Asni market is the people and their traditional way of life. The Saturday market is a weekly community meeting: people exchanging bits of news and information. They trade with each other and unload their mules only to load them up again with foodstuffs and munitions.

Nature is unforgiving in this part of the country. The looming mountain ranges remind one of the harsh winters these villagers have to endure. People told me that the creek near Asni often turns into a thundering river, hurtling in



Unloading the mules in Asni, the snow-capped Atlas mountains in the background

banks and washing away roads, houses and people.

Away from trinket and cloth merchants, one reaches the area where vegetable and meat vendors congregate. Here sheep, cows and chickens are slaughtered and their meat sold fresh to customers. Closer by is a fish stall with strange-looking sea and river catch. The sea is at least 300 kilometers away, but merchants haul frozen fish from Marrakech's central market.

And then there is a corner where freshly-picked mint is sold in huge quantities. In Morocco green tea, mixed with high doses of green mint and plenty of sugar, is the national beverage.

The last row of stalls houses the eating places. They are the only roofed mud buildings overlooking the creek. Here each shop owner displays what is basically a mixed assortment of steaming foods: No less than five or six kinds of Tajin, a stew of meat, fish, chicken or vegetable, slowly cooking in a covered shallow clay pot over a quiet fire.

For few dirhams one gets a choice of Tajin, a loaf of fresh baked bread from the nearby bakers and his or her fill of green tea. One has the choice of eating inside the dimly lit room, or sitting at a modest table under a canopy.

If you prefer barbecued meat, which was our preference, then a kilo of mutton purchased from a nearby butcher is given to a freelance cook who stands by his charcoal grill to offer his service. Within minutes the aroma of burning meat filled our nostrils. We sat under a canopy wait

ing for our lunch to be readied. Around us the clamor continued. With us sat an old man, wearing a worn-out robe, a turban, and sipping green tea.

He had just finished eating a meal of barbecued meat with bread. His skin was pink and scabby, probably by disease. He poured some more tea and offered it to me. I hesitated but obliged him and swallowed up the sweet drink.

After we had eaten our lunch we walked to the creek at the market's edge and faced the majestic mountains to the background. In the immediate area was a more intriguing view. Tens of mules stood idly by as their owners were busy carrying out chores at the nearby market. They have come a long way, descending from nearby hills and mountains. A crushing journey home awaited them. In fact some Berbers had already packed up and started their long trip from Asni.

I was enraptured by the view; the green and brown hills in the background, the gray mules laden with goods tiptoeing in earnest, their pale-faced riders in colorful robes and turbans balancing themselves carefully on top.

Our stay in Asni was coming to end. We found our car at the market's gate. The driver offered to take us a few miles up the road towards the mountains. We sat silently as the car made its way along the only road in and out of Asni. We passed the post office, the schools and the only hotel, Hotel Toubkal, before catching up with a caravan of mules making its way towards the hills. The creek was way below us

now and the valley was widening up again. A few miles further and we were alone facing the majestic Toubkal, its highest peak caressing some innocuous puffs of cloud against a brilliant blue sky. On the other side of the valley lay a small village, nestled in the bosom of a red brown plateau, tilted by man, overlooking the creek. The adobe buildings leaned against each other.

The scene was lifeless, or so it appeared from our vantage point. It was quiet, the silence punctuated frequently by the bark of a dog or the cry of a falcon.

We finally began our journey back to Marrakech. Once more we were negotiating the tricky turns of the curved road down the hills. And then we were speeding in the open plateau towards Marrakech, with its Moorish city walls and minarets and orange orchards. Behind us the Atlas mountains stared regally.

How to get there: Royal Jordanian offers a twice weekly service to Casablanca with continuous daily connections to Marrakech on Royal Air Maroc. Also a four-hour train journey from Casablanca to Marrakech is a nice alternative. From Marrakech tour operators can arrange day excursions to the desert towns, the mountains and lakes. Rental cars are also available while public transport, such as taxis and mini buses, can be had at bargain prices.



The gateway to Asni market on a busy Saturday

الأسني